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RICHARD ALLEVA on 'Schindler's List'

COMMONWEAL

$2.00 February 11, 1994

BOOKS

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MARY JO WEAVER on Catholic Conservatives

COLUMNISTS

SIDNEY CALLAHAN

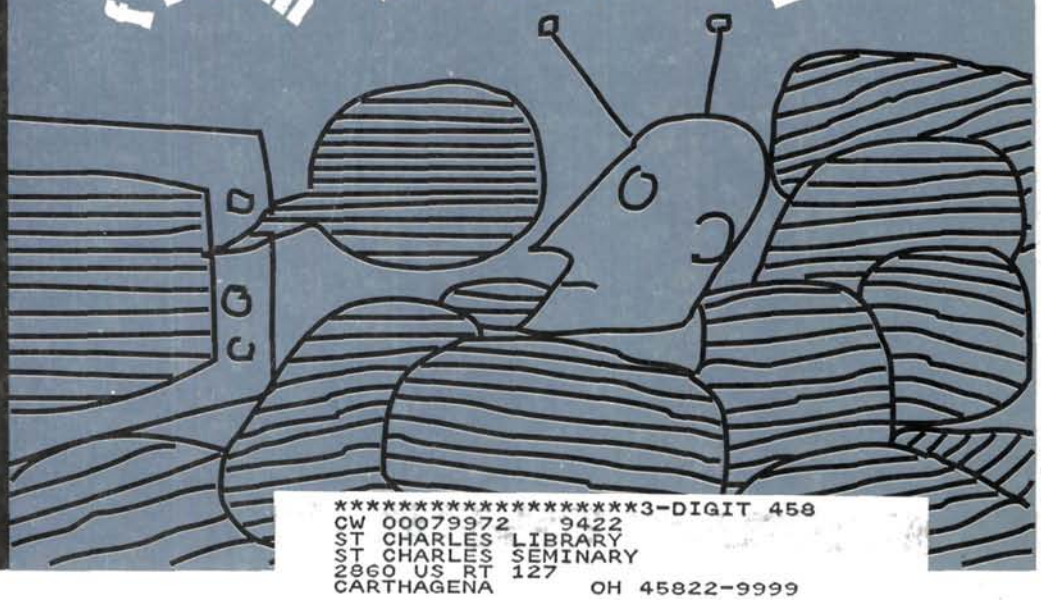
LIZ LEIBOLD McCLOSKEY

JOHN GARVEY

IRONIES & INVERSIONS
The novels of Anthony Burgess
Suzanne Keen

NEVER ON SUNDAYS
Whatever happened to leisure?
Edward Vacek

FRANK McCONNELL from LOS ANGELES



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Alleva hit the right note

Tracy, Calif.

To the Editors: My wife Marie and I were beginning to think we were the only ones who did not appreciate Jane Campion's *The Piano*. Most critics were simply agog over it, and nearly everyone has continued to jump on the bandwagon. Thank heavens for the honest and courageous appraisal given by your critic Richard Alleva [January 14].

Jane Campion is indeed a most talented director, as shown by *Angel at My Table*. Even in *The Piano* the cinematography and the symbolism were very well done, and the theme of feminine liberation was quite telling and up-to-date. But the dramatic development, depth, and understanding just were not there. No matter how many acclaim the film's alleged greatness, your critic was not afraid to suggest that perhaps the emperor (Keitel?) had no clothes.

ANDREW GALLIGAN

Abortion: we need to talk

Chicago, Ill.

To the Editors: In Margaret O'Brien Steinfels's critique of Anna Quindlen and of Frances Kissling of Catholics for a Free Choice ["Drawing Lines," January 14], we are faced with some of the most problematic attitudes of Catholic official thought on the abortion debate in this country. While there is a problem when Catholics not versed in canon law or the Catholic theological tradition claim that abortion is acceptable, does that mean that those of us who know better should condescend to them? Should we regard their deepest, heartfelt opinions as being half-cooked because they were not fostered on the college level? And what does it say about the Catholic church's ability to converse with its own people, many of whom do not even have the benefit of a high school understanding of theology, if that fact precludes their right to be included in the debate?

I will admit to not knowing much about Catholics for a Free Choice and where their consciences lie in the matter of calling themselves "Catholic," but I would say that the bigger problem lies in the church's refusal to engage its own people on the topic of abortion. I recently spoke to Anne Carr about the church's punitive response when she allowed her name to appear on an open letter that urged conversation on abortion and other topics.

It may be that few Catholics know the history of Catholic teaching on abortion, but given the opportunity by the church to be part of a conversation about it they might learn something, and perhaps that conversation would put an end to the one wherein most average "faithful, but dissenting Catholics" are "talking with their feet."

GIA G. PASCARELLI

"Can he phone you back? He's scolding the tortoise."

Thanks, but no thanks

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: I was much moved, nay, edified by the Rev. Fleming Rutledge's "thank you note" to the Roman Catholic church for having the courage to resist the drift of our times by refusing to accommodate to every passing whim of the culture [January 14]. I cannot help but wonder, however, whether her praise for the Roman church undermines her central thesis: that the central divisions in Christianity, both denominational and doctrinal, are relatively insignificant. For example, she holds that Saint Paul would not be greatly bothered by a Christendom divided into Presbyterians, Catholics, Pentecostals, etc. Nor does she seem particularly exercised that Christians still differ radically about such central doctrines as the definition of sin, prayer to the saints, and justification. Only after expressing a certain casual insouciance about these central matters does the author go on to praise Roman Catholicism for its stance *contra mundum*.

But might there not be a connection between the doctrinal positions of Catholicism and its very ability to resist the times? Would not the proposal to weaken the distinctively Catholic doctrines for the sake of unity ultimately lead to the danger that the Roman Catholic church too would fall prey to the same accusation that Pastor Rutledge levels against mainline Protestantism: that it "has made so many accommodations to contemporary culture as to be almost indistinguishable from it sometimes"?

EDWARD T. OAKES, S.J.

(Continued on page 25)

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COMMONWEAL

CONTENTS

Volume CXXI, Number 3

Correspondence: 2
Editorials: 3
Fight fierce but fair: *Sidney Callahan* 5
To Grandma's house we go: *Liz Leibold McCloskey* 6
Pass it on: *John Garvey* 7
Ironies & inversions: *Suzanne Keen* 9
Never on Sundays: *Edward Vacek* 13
Poetry: *Blake Leland* 14
Screen: *Richard Alleva* 16
Media: *Frank McConnell* 18

BOOKS

Utopia Unarmed, by Jorge G. Castañeda: *Joseph A. Page* 20
Only Words, by Catharine A. MacKinnon: *David McCabe* 22
Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950-85, by Patrick Allitt: *Mary Jo Weaver* 24

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The state of disunion

The sense of an ordered universe is under siege. The earthquake in Southern California and the midwestern floods this past summer remind us of human vulnerability in the face of natural forces unleashed with awesome fury. Even the pagans have reason to repeat the old saw: (Wo)man proposes; God disposes. President Bill Clinton in his State of the Union address January 25 made reference to these recent natural disasters by way of acclaiming the can-do spirit of the American people. But given the state of the union Clinton actually described, he might better have cast these natural disasters, à la *Lear* or *Macbeth*, as echoes of a disordered *human* universe about which he did offer some astute and little-noted observations.

Policy wonks can overhaul or tinker, they can reform health care, remake the welfare system, and increase the penalty for violent crime. Who knows this better than Clinton? But he also knows and reminded the nation that government cannot do everything. In the absence of personal and social change, government can, in the end, do little. Unless individuals are willing to shoulder their responsibilities, especially for sexual behavior and the children who follow, all of the maneuverings of micro- and macro-policy making are for nought.

Clinton said as much to the assembled Congress: "As you demand tougher penalties for those who choose violence, let us also remember how we came to this sad point. In our toughest neighborhoods, on our meanest streets, in our poorest rural areas, we have seen a stunning and simultaneous breakdown of community, family, and work—the heart and soul of civilized society." The most telling figure in this analysis is the one Clinton cited toward the end of his speech: "Within a decade more than half of the children will be born into families where there has been no marriage." Right now that number is 30 percent and rising—among whites as well as blacks. At last, a social problem blacks and whites share and, above all, can talk about!

Deeply embedded in the disorder of our society and the growing gap between the haves and the have-nots is the most poignant have-not of all—a child without two parents. Such children are have-nots in other predictable ways; they very often grow up without enough attention, security, discipline, and structures—the social connectors that allow them to participate in and build up "the heart and soul of civilized society." Perhaps because Clinton watched his own mother, Virginia Kelley, struggle as a single parent, he brings a sobering perspective to a tragedy susceptible both to foolish romanticizing and to ineffectual stigmatizing.

Single parenthood and its basic cause, children born out of wedlock, pose an irresolvable conflict for public policy. Our welfare system supplies the meagerest of resources, yet even at that minimum seems attractive. Welfare payments, food stamps, and medical care can become for an adolescent girl a kind of ticket to "independence," and for the father a way out of taking responsibility for his child and for

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himself as well. Disordered personal relationships, disordered families, disordered communities don't operate in a social vacuum. Their effects add up.

What should government do? Some conservatives, Charles Murray for example, argue that teen-aged mothers should receive no public assistance at all; others have proposed a cut-off for any child born while its mother is on welfare. There is a growing sentiment among moderates for a two-year limit for all welfare recipients. But were such draconian measures made mandatory, we would see more families among the homeless, more abandoned or neglected children. Teen-aged mothers, lacking education and work experience, would be hardest hit of all. There is, moreover, another, not-so-subtle remedy standing in the wings—abortion.

How then to discourage out-of-wedlock teen-age pregnancies? Remaking parts of the welfare system may help. Liz Leibold McCloskey outlines one proposal in her column: Require teen-aged mothers to live with their families or in supervised group homes in order to obtain benefits (see page 6). The goal? Help these young women graduate from high school, help them finish growing up, help them become good mothers. Meantime, protect the children from their mothers' immaturity by surrounding them with other adults. At least the "independence" incentive would disappear.

Encourage adolescent girls to say no to sex, and teach them how to resist pressure from their peers (female as well as male). Such "novel" ideas are part of a little noted effort making its way in some sex education programs (*New York Times*, January 16, 1994). Give the encouragement of abstinence at least as much social and cultural support as distributing condoms and prescribing contraceptives in high-school clinics.

Maximize the collection of child-support payments from non-paying parents. This will at least make a social statement: conceiving a child brings with it financial responsibilities.

Government cannot do everything; it cannot raise children or create loving families. For that, all of us need to find meaning in our own childhoods and in our own traditions and then to exercise individual responsibility. Here is the crux of the problem, the actual challenge to the state of the union: In a society where more and more citizen do not habitually feel and exercise responsibility for themselves and their families, government cannot tap into the reservoirs of social responsibility upon which the welfare, health-care, and education systems depend; indeed, upon which the government itself depends. That is the black hole into which our disordered state of the union is casting us.

ET CETERA

In a comment on a recent Supreme Court decision, a *New York Times* editorial [January 26] remarks: "Not everyone who opposes abortion and works against its availability is a lawbreaker." For the *Times*, this is a truly generous concession. We are moved to respond in the same spirit. Not everyone who is prochoice on abortion is innately evil.

Excelsior!

More than one hundred friends of Edward Skillin and *Commonweal* gathered at Saint Joseph's Church in Greenwich Village on January 20 to break bread liturgically and otherwise in celebration of Edward's ninetieth birthday, which also marked his sixtieth year at the magazine. Archbishop Emeritus Peter L. Gerety of Newark, New Jersey, Edward's local diocese, was the principal celebrant of the Mass; Monsignor George G. Higgins delivered the homily. In an address over lunch served in the church's school auditorium, former *Commonweal* editor Peter Steinfels, now doing penance for some undisclosed sins as chief religion correspondent for the *New York Times*, reminisced about Edward's miraculous fiscal powers and equally mysterious spiritual serenity. Edward humbled us all, as usual, with a gracious tribute of his own. A good time, indeed, but we left this virtually unprecedented gathering still hungry. Hungry, that is, for more opportunities to both honor our esteemed publisher and meet face to face with the larger *Commonweal* community. Next year, same time, same place?

Same publisher.

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FIGHT FIERCE BUT FAIR

AND PRACTICE AT HOME

Good family fights prepare you for the larger world of democratic conflict. If you learn to fight well and fairly at home, you can contribute to the civic struggle necessary to keep a pluralistic society moving. I'm constantly advocating my causes in public debate, but during family holidays I'm kept in fighting trim by late-night arguments with my adult children.

Home debating seems natural to me because I constantly argued with my strong-minded father, who came from good Southern prejudiced stock (lapsed Calvinist division). He refused to reform his racist, militaristic, atheistic, anti-intellectual views quickly enough for me. But as I married young (forty years this June so I was a bride of nine), my basic combat training and maneuvering skills in argument have come from frequent marital, martial engagements.

It's no secret that my husband Dan and I have had private and public disagreements on religious and ethical issues, as for instance over abortion. Dan takes a moderate prochoice position and I am more militantly prolife. At least we've produced a book and a few articles detailing those internal conflicts.

A magazine reporter once called to ask me how we could continue to stay married since we disagreed so vigorously over abortion. I replied that after so many decades we had so many deep and serious conflicts between us that we hardly noticed the abortion disagreement at all! When the young interviewer (unmarried) didn't laugh, I quickly explained that this was my attempt at a joke, as in irony. You know, like the comment of the obese Herman Kahn, who once said, "Inside this fat man there lives another fat man."

Thankfully, and not hopefully, Dan thinks these kinds of sallies are funny, and makes plenty himself. Obviously this marriage can be saved. A shared sense of humor is the best bonding agent or glue I know of to keep friends, spouses, and adult children sticking around.

Disagreements abound but agreement abounds more. Dan and I, and my children, friends, and relations agree about more things than we disagree. One of the most critical agreements that Dan and I share is our joint commitment to the Callahan guidelines for conducting civilized debate. If we could convince the larger world of these rules (painfully acquired from experience in public debates on abortion), we could make a great contribution to cleaning up our polluted public discourse.

Rule Number 1: Be obsessively civil, courteous, and charitable in your use of language. Words never are "mere words" (as Catharine A. MacKinnon, the prominent feminist theorist, has written). But those who regularly use words (including prominent feminists) should take care to be absolutely accurate in their facts and remain calm enough to argue sans hyperbolic thrusts issued with nasty sneers of contempt. (A list of all the known offenders against this rule would take up all of the space of charity.)

Rule Number 2 follows from number one: Always show respect for your opponents and assume their good will and sincerity (even if you might harbor a wee doubt or two in your heart). Address what your opponents say not what you infallibly detect to be their hidden agenda or underlying motives. After all, only the Shadow knows what evil lurks in the heart of men and women, so take the magnanimous high road, even if it doesn't heap coals of fire on your opponent's head, à la Saint Paul.

Rule Number 3 may sometimes conflict with the personnel available for debate: Try to argue against the best representative of your opposition, and not against a strawperson, or the other side's most repellent fanatic extremist—that's too easy, and "unsportspersonlike behavior unbefitting a gentleperson."

When attacked by an incoherent ranter, veritably foaming at the mouth, or when confronted by a cowed novice too inept to give his or her side's best arguments, present them yourself. If you can't state the opposing side's arguments better than they can, and then show why the position is unsatisfactory, you haven't done your homework. Why should serious differences be decided by which side has the most crazies roaming around its fringes?

Rule Number 4 demands the most intellectual integrity and honesty: Admit the price of following your own position. Every side in a serious disagreement has some weaknesses, otherwise all reasonable and intelligent persons of good will would agree already. Unfortunately, it's easy to see the looming drawbacks of your opponents' arguments but difficult to admit that your own solution includes risks and difficulties. A truly unflinching mind can confront a choice between less-

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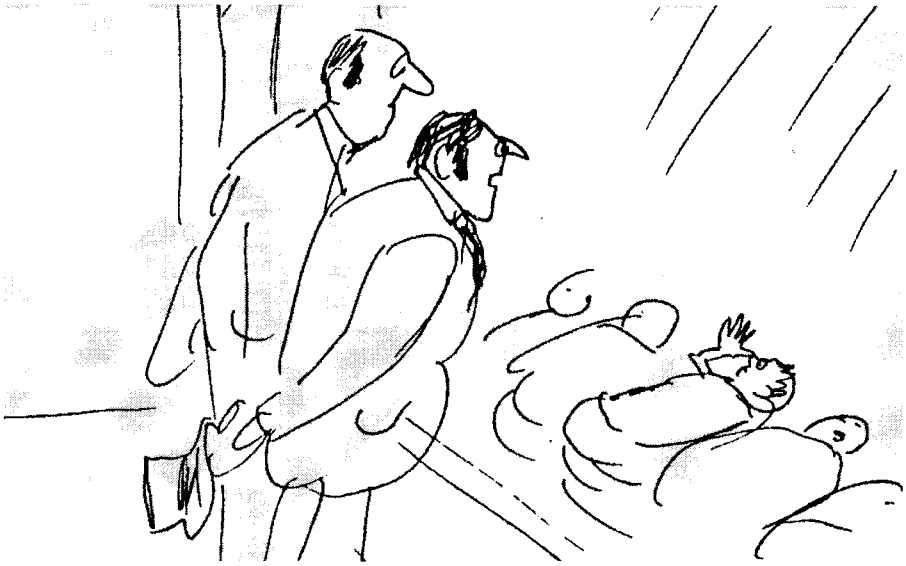

"Now there's a kid getting off to a bad start."

er evils and say, "Yes, I am willing to say no to this or that demand, even at the price of legal coercion." Or in another kind of argument, "No, I don't think it wrong to let people abuse their freedom and make mistakes."

Americans are all too human. We hate to face dilemmas or scenarios which don't have happy endings. We want everything at the same time, even if the demands are logically contradictory. Perhaps more than anything else, we hate sustained argument and hard-focused thinking.

But the right sort of family training can produce people able to persevere in arguments and willing to confront, to persuade, to win through to a higher ground or a better consensus. As the British officer instructed his troops, "One, two, three, and repeat your fire—without rancor."

Friendly firefights or the learned ability to listen and "respectfully disagree," take practice. You must fully understand that those who disagree with you and have different positions in politics, sex, religion, or whatever, are not despicable people. (Or if they are despicable, it's not because of their dreadful opinions.)

We can resolve to play by the rules of civil and charitable debate. Who knows? By attentive, polite listening to all sides of conflicted encounters in and out of the family, you can learn new things. Your father sometimes did know best, your spouse has had a well-taken point or two, and even your adult children may be onto something you need to know. Let's keep the home fires burning for the greater good of the body politic. Or for the commonweal? □

OF SEVERAL MINDS Liz Leibold McCloskey

TO GRANDMA'S HOUSE WE GO

REFORMING WELFARE

The grandmothers all agree on one thing: you can get the attention and support of District of Columbia social services when you know how to work the system. If you can stand the wrenching pain of it, what you do is leave your daughter's child at the doorstep of D.C. social services late in the day; get to the emergency placement hearing, which will be held within twenty-four hours; demonstrate your commitment to caring for the child and the mother's unwillingness to do so; and the judge, relieved, will temporarily place the child in your home—with support. "You cry all the way there on the bus, and you cry all the way home," say the grandmothers, but it works. If you are a child who lives in Anacostia, or East St. Louis, or Harlem, you are lucky if you have a resourceful grandmother who fiercely loves you, even if it means leaving you at social services for the night. But it also means that your mother and father are too young, too addicted, or too overwhelmed to take care of you.

As welfare reform comes up in Congress, this question about young parents, especially teen-agers unprepared and unequipped for parenthood, looms large. The obvious solution—they should not have sex—is certainly not fashionable (or legislatable). Other solutions line up roughly around two views. First, there is the generically conservative view that girls become pregnant because welfare payments act as an incentive by giving them resources and independence they would not otherwise have. Charles Murray's solution is to cut off welfare for single, teen-aged mothers. Second, there is the generically liberal view that more and more girls become pregnant because they lack adequate education and birth control, a view that drives proposals for more funding for after-school programs and family planning clinics.

Whatever view you choose, changing this system presents the perennial dilemma of any reform initiative: How do you change the system but continue to respond to the immediate problem? If you cut off welfare payments for single mothers, the children are still there needing food, clothes, and a place to live. They deserve a fair start in life. But if you continue to help, you sanction teen-agers having a child out of wedlock. A way must be found that does not encourage teen-age childbearing, but which takes each new baby's welfare seriously.

Perhaps part of the answer lies with the example of the grandmothers. Remember the old settlement houses. Every troubled neighborhood should have group homes for pregnant teen-agers and teen-age mothers. The homes could be run by the older women and men of the neighborhood (not necessarily grandparents, but grandparently) who would be paid a re-

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spectable salary. Strict discipline would be enforced: no drinking, no drugs, no sex. The fathers of the children could participate in structured activities at set times, but they would not be able to saunter in and out at their leisure. Having an additional child would end in eviction from the home. The "grandmothers" and "grandfathers" would be a stable and steady presence for both mothers and children. Parenting skills could be both taught and observed. Support groups could help the moms both share their anxieties and face up to their responsibilities.

Rather than caseloads, social workers and public health workers would have a "houseload." They would see that babies and children received their vaccinations and other care, while mothers were counseled and tutored. Cooperative baby-sitting among the young mothers would allow them to go to school, to work, or to job training.

Community-based church organizations or social service agencies could sponsor and run the homes with federal support (much as foster-care homes are run). Funding for such a comprehensive program could be drawn from funds that now go to support young mothers and their children. And the clincher: Teen-age mothers would not be eligible for welfare benefits unless they lived with their parents or in such a group home.

Critics ask how much the federal government can require from beneficiaries of federal programs and federal dollars. But federal money is itself a hook, as evidenced by clear precedents in the field. When Senator Daniel Moynihan's (D-N.Y.) Family Support Act became law in 1988, welfare benefits were linked to participation in job training or education programs. The House Republican welfare reform bill requires teen-age mothers to live in their parents' homes if they want benefits. It is likely that any Clinton reform plan will include a similar measure. Some Democrats balk at the suggestion, arguing that if it is a home in which sexual abuse, child abuse, and drug or alcohol abuse are found, then it is no place for a baby. But surely some homes would be suitable, and perhaps tying teen-age benefits to living with your family would end the "independence" incentive, or provide an extended family for the baby.

When living with the family is impossible or seems unwise, there is much to be said for group homes, which would provide social, medical, and moral interventions. And, unlike proposals to open modern-day orphanages or twenty-four-hour preschools, group homes would keep children and mothers together, while helping the mothers to grow up and even move out of poverty.

One model for group homes already exists in the form of alternatives to prison for convicted women and their children. These programs, most notably in California, attempt to provide a stable, caring, stimulating environment for children along with pediatric care, parenting classes, substance abuse treatment, support groups, counseling, and educational and vocational training.

Before Congress began its holiday recess, an amendment was offered to the crime bill in the Senate that would fund a select number of these prison programs. Conservatives fought the proposal, arguing that it was soft on crime and rewarded criminals; supporters argued that children should not suffer for their parents' crimes.

The same arguments would be replayed if group homes for teen-age moms were ever seriously considered. But in this case, liberals would label the plan patronizing or unfairly restrictive of a woman's reproductive freedom when no crime has been committed. This question of coercion may ignite the real debate, if it takes place.

The question is whether we think that having a baby as an unmarried teen-ager, when there is no chance the parent(s) can support the child, is wrong. Senator Moynihan recently argued that our social problems are largely a result of "defining deviance down," or lowering the threshold on our social agreement about what is wrong (*The American Scholar*, Winter 1993). This is where I see the real value, practically and symbolically, of keeping the grandmothers in the picture. They have the authority to stop behavior that jeopardizes the welfare of a child. Their combined wisdom might bring some discretion, common sense, and good judgment into the lives of these young mothers and their children. Restoring old-fashioned values of prudence and responsibility, with a little guilt thrown in, might take us back to family arrangements that place the child at the center. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

PASS IT ON

THE FRESHNESS OF DEEP DOWN THINGS

When I was in college I remember one of many late-night conversations with friends, the kind you don't have at any other time in your life. This night we were talking about what had first drawn us to books and reading and the later love of learning, to the quirky things that kids enjoy independently of the officially sanctioned subjects parents and teachers recommend, and in some cases enjoy in defiance of them. We were all males (this was Notre Dame, mid-sixties), and our list had some uniform aspects. Everything involved the gigantic ancient eras in geology, millions of light-years in astronomy, huge dinosaurs, and the outsized figures of Norse mythology—this last was my own love. It, whatever it was that drew us, was always bigger then we were, and vaguely or definitely scary; but we could know something about it and feel that, because of our knowing, we were part of it, and had some control over it. (Knowledge is power, especially when you are a little kid.) It was also, always, older.

For most of human history the invocation of the ancient was a way of estab-

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lishing credentials. Philosophers and occultists traced their arts back to Hermes; the Greeks tried to show that their philosophy had its origins in the truths of ancient Egypt, and Neo-Platonists invoked the earlier spirit of Pythagoras. The whole of the Bible is established on the patriarchs, who also have connections with Egypt and Ur of the Chaldees, and go back farther, to a beginning in which human beings were meant to live in communion with God; but something happened that estranged us, and the estrangement explains the obviously broken world in which we live.

The authority of the ancient is not established on the fact that ancient things are very old (although age and wisdom are clearly allied in traditions from every part of the world, probably for the simple human reason that it takes time to learn things), but because what is ancient is seen as closer to the origin, the beginning, the source; and the fact that something comes to us from ancient times is a sign of its solidity. In a way, the ancient is seen as something fresher than anything later, because it has proven itself less prone to decay. The recent is more likely to be thin, untried, and shallow than something close to the source, to the beginning of the tradition, which after all these years is still with us.

Our culture has managed to turn that understanding on its head. We are not inclined to believe in a source of revelation, a unique time. An earlier time is only that, a time no more or less meaningful than our own, just earlier, and because it is older it is probably less relevant than something more recent. And there is certainly a share of truth in this (although the role of market capitalism, and not any insight into reality, has a lot to do with this desire for the new). Though the Greeks recognized the greater antiquity of Egyptian culture and were somewhat cowed by it, we find something odd in their obeisance, and it strikes us as strange that the fathers of the church would look to the Greek philosophers as precursors of Christian revelation.

What these efforts show, however, is a desire to find a consensus, through ages and cultures. Saint Justin Martyr, in looking for the "seeds of the Word" in pagan as well as Hebrew antiquity, was making a case for the fullness of revelation: it was

"It's incredible to think some of them date as far back as the 1960s and '70s."

not confined. God had made something of himself known everywhere, before Christ as well as after, to pagans as well as to Jews. It was this harmony of understandings that indicated, at the very least, that Christians were not irrational in their claims. (Justin was, after all, a defender of a religion which was illegal and had been accused of irrationality.)

This sense of consensus is also an important facet of tradition. The word tradition means, in its root, something handed on. You hand something on for use, but the sense of tradition is that the thing handed on, from one person and community to another, reaches back to a source and finds its life there. In Christianity that source is the teaching of the Apostles, the witnesses to Christ's life and Resurrection, and apostolic succession means both fidelity to that teaching and a direct continuity with it. This sense of something ablaze at the beginning, and not an air of antiquity, a mustiness, is what tradition is meant to be. The romantic, exotic sense of antiquity with which we surround the idea of the ancient entered Western culture at the same time any serious understanding of the ancient, and tradition, began to decline.

So did a certain decadence in traditionalism itself. Those people who defend the sonorities of the King James Version of the Bible against any later translations, to take one of many examples, are not really defenders of tradition so much as they are esthetes. The *koine* Greek of the New Testament is much less even in its quality than the English of the KJV, and there is much to be said for the translations of various books of the Bible done by the novelist Reynolds Price (in *A Palpable God*), or the poet Peter Levi (who translated *The Holy Gospel of John*), or Richmond Lattimore, the translator of Greek classics (who has translated the four Gospels).

In all of these cases, the translators are people who understand the holiness of words, and that this is honored by rendering them with a sense of their freshness, the understanding that a word properly seen is always saying something new, for the first time. These translations are attempts, by artists, to restore the sense of freshness to words which have become too familiar to us; by presenting them new they can bring us to a fresh appreciation of what lies at the source of our faith. Peter Levi (*The Holy Gospel of John*, Morehouse-Barlow, 1988) offers a translation which tries to capture the shifting tenses and the rushing quality of the Greek original: "Early morning had already come, when Jesus stood there on the beach. So Jesus says to them, 'Boys, have you got anything to eat?'"

This isn't the sort of translation I would use all the time, but it is helpful: it can be bracing to get a sense of the urgency that informed the Gospel writers. This is still the center of what tradition means at root. I know Orthodox priests who think of themselves as quite traditional because they dress like nineteenth-century Russian village priests; I know Catholics who believe that by insisting on the Council of Trent as the touchstone of all true Catholicism they are being traditional. This isn't tradition at all, but only the veneration of frozen moments, fragments of a long but still new story. A genuine sense of tradition sees what truly is changeless, genuinely ancient, and present right now is the Christian message, and when it comes across most powerfully it comes across as fresh. I think of Hopkins's line: "There lives the dearest freshness deep down things." And another: "He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: Praise him." □

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IRONIES & INVERSIONS

THE ART OF ANTHONY BURGESS

SUZANNE KEEN

In one of Anthony Burgess's (1917-1993) many comic novels, *One Hand Clapping* (1972), a woman observes her husband answering quiz questions about books on a television knowledge bowl. For a prize of a thousand pounds, he identifies a group of Renaissance playwrights. While the audience applauds his unlikely success, his wife is startled to see ghostly Dekker, Jonson, and Massinger, silent and dignified, wearing little gold earrings and ruffs. No one in the studio, not even the winning contestant, knows the plays or the men, who have been reduced to revenants conjured up by trivia.

Burgess's last novel, *A Dead Man in Deptford* (1993) puts the flesh back on Christopher Marlowe, author of *Doctor Faustus, The Jew of Malta*, and *Tamburlaine*. Like his "WS," (William Shakespeare) in *Nothing Like the Sun*, Burgess's Marlowe eats, drinks, vomits, has sex, witnesses a public execution, betrays and is betrayed, composes blank verse, and participates in the making of Renaissance drama. Like many of Burgess's novels, *A Dead Man in Deptford* investigates ambition and disappointment, and the inextricable realms of playfulness and guiltiness. No dreary hero, Kit Marlowe, or Morley, or Merlin ("the name is unsure") blasphemes, spies, and speculates with Raleigh and his cohorts in a vividly realized "School of Night." The novel succeeds as an historical fiction by evoking a world and a time; it provides the necessary thrill of brushes with the even-more-famous, as when Kit and Will Shogspere collaborate on a play; and it moves quickly despite the necessary exposition.

In *Dead Man*, Burgess imagines answers to literary historians' questions about Marlowe: was he really an atheist, and a homosexual; did he spy on the continent for the Crown or was he a double-agent, conspiring with Catholic intriguers; did he really die in a brawl over a tavern bill, or was he assassinated for political reasons? In taking up Christopher Marlowe, in the fourth centenary of his murder, Burgess returns to the subject of his undergraduate thesis to recreate not only an argument, however, but an imagined world. Burgess's Elizabethan playhouses, taverns, jails, roads, country houses, and colleges make effective backdrops for his zingy dialogues and conversations. Although he builds his fiction with eye-catching words, celebrates and concocts etymologies, coincidences, and language games, Burgess excels here as elsewhere in describing the corporeal. The menus are authentically Elizabethan in their combinations of sweet and pungent; the disembowelments are unforgettable, if not the sex; the smell of Virginian tobacco makes some characters crave and others complain. Readers who can locate a library copy of this book, which has not yet appeared in the United States, will not find it abstruse.

In an interview over a decade ago, Burgess explained to the critic Samuel Coale his longstanding interest in Marlowe as deriving from "a kind of Catholic quality." Part fascination with a mysterious career (was he an undercover priest?) and part recognition of the guilt so copiously represented in the plays, Burgess's instinct led him to speculate that Marlowe had betrayed someone and had suffered an irreconcilable desire for both damnation and salvation. As an undergraduate,

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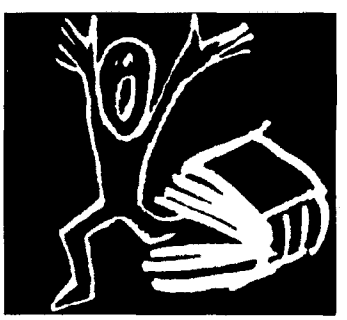

Suzanne Keen's critical essay on Anthony Burgess is another in our series of articles on contemporary Catholic writers of fiction. We have asked our essayists to give an overview of the author's work, showing our readers where and how this writer locates the central human drama, the big questions, the religious crisis of our time. What does the Catholic sensibility of Anthony Burgess tell us about our common world, about the state of our souls? The most recently published article in the series was written by James Finn on Robert Stone (November 5, 1993).

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Books discussed in this essay

Abba Abba, *Faber, 127 pp. (out of print).*
Beard's Roman Women, *McGraw Hill, 155 pp. (out of print).*
A Clockwork Orange, *Norton, $7.95, 188 pp.*
A Dead Man in Deptford, *Hutchinson, not available in U.S.*
Earthly Powers, *Carroll and Graf, $15.95, 608 pp.*
Enderby, *Norton, 412 pp. (out of print).*
Little Wilson and Big God: The First Part of the Confessions, *Grove-Atlantic, $14.95, 460 pp.*
The Long Day Wanes: A Malayan Trilogy, *Norton, $10.95, 512 pp.*
Man of Nazareth, *McGraw Hill, 357 pp. (out of print).*
MF, *Knopf, 242 pp. (out of print).*
Nothing Like the Sun, *Norton, $9.95, 240 pp.*
One Hand Clapping, *Knopf, 216 pp. (out of print).*
The Pianoplayers, *Pocket Books, $4.95*
ReJoyce, *Norton, $8.95, 276 pp.*
The Right to an Answer, *Norton, $3.95, 255 pp.*
The Wanting Seed, *Norton, $9.95, 288 pp.*
You've Had Your Time: The Second Part of the Confessions, *Grove Atlantic, $23.50, 403 pp.*

*In addition to Anthony Burgess's fiction and autobiographies, I have drawn on a 1981 interview with Samuel Coale (*Modern Fiction Studies, *27:3, 429-452). I am indebted in my discussion of the Pelagian, Augustinian, and Manichaean in Burgess to the work of John J. Stinson (*Anthony Burgess Revisited, *Twayne, 1991) and Geoffrey Aggeler (*Anthony Burgess: The Artist as Novelist, *University of Alabama Press, 1979).*

Burgess had only recently lapsed from the Catholic faith of his upbringing and part of Marlowe's appeal may have lain in the poet's reputation as a notorious atheist and blasphemer. Yet the immediate surroundings of a world at war made Marlowe's visions of hell seem relevant; Burgess recalls in more than one place the experience of taking examinations in a glass-roofed gymnasium, during an air raid, with the bombs going overhead.

The image of a young man packed with knowledge, spilling it out on paper, while the bombers unload their death-dealing cargo can stand usefully as an emblem for and explanation of Anthony Burgess's career. To be prolific, as the word suggests, is to be the opposite of dead. The author of thirty-four works of fiction; two volumes of autobiography; fifteen nonfiction books, including criticism, reviews, and travel writing; a handful of plays, translations, librettos, and screenplays, Burgess produced to the point that he risked censure, not to mention incredulity. Yet, as his critics point out, he started late as a novelist, having first found a vocation as a composer. He had begun publishing novels (the three "Malayan" novels that make up *The Long Day Wanes*) in the late 1950s, during his service as an education officer in Malaya and Borneo. In 1959 he collapsed with what was diagnosed as a brain tumor and was sent back to England to live out his allotted year. In 1960-61 he published the five novels that he wrote that year in an effort to support himself and to provide for his wife Lynne. He neither died, nor desisted from writing. In 1962 he published *A Clockwork Orange*, the novella that would make him famous (especially after Stanley Kubrick's 1971 film). Fame fostered his literary career where it has hindered others.

While it is true that Burgess wrote for a living, he also consciously employed language in serious play, to reconcile the opposites he perceived in a Manichaean "duoverse," instead of universe. Though one of his disingenuous narrators claims "It is not to my purpose to observe on good and evil, or right and wrong, since I have little skill in that kind of thinking"(*Man of Nazareth*, 1979), Burgess was often preoccupied with these issues and endeavored to debunk a too-optimistic Pelagianism and to warn against a too-deterministic Augustinianism in human, as well as fictional affairs. Reconciling the conflict between opposing forces does not, in Burgess's fiction, mean settling for a middle way. He preferred commitment, even to a mistaken ideal, to neutrality. In writing, he engaged in an ongoing comic, cosmic ritual. His career attested to the efficacy of ludic (playful) action, even though his vision, in the novels, was almost unremittingly pessimistic about the use of human endeavor.

In his autobiographies, Burgess indicated that he had recently returned to the church, although he had also made known his scorn for the reforms it had undergone since his apostasy. His last two novels were less overtly concerned than his previous books with the struggle between Pelagian and Augustinian impulses, and it is not clear how closely he adhered to the Manichaean heresy that undergirded so much of his fiction, though opposites clearly attracted him. In four decades' worth of novels, a reader has ample opportunity to explore the importance of these ideas to Burgess; in fact, they are impossible to avoid, as his critics John J. Stinson and Geoffrey Aggeler have demonstrated. Despite his aversion to didactic fiction, Burgess did not hesitate to instruct (and quiz) his readers on the Pelagian heresy and its bracing Augustinian antidote, discussed in more detail below.

The "kind of Catholic quality" that is so noticeable in Burgess's fiction comes not only from these interests, but from numerous episodes drawn directly from the life and opinions of John Burgess Wilson, a Manchester Catholic, raised by an Irish Catholic stepmother (who repelled him), educated in Catholic schools in the fashion of the 1920s and 1930s, who left the church as a teen-ager, either as a result of guilt about his sex-

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ual adventures, or through the too-convincing presentation of Martin Luther's views by a history master (or both). The best guide to Burgess's life is the two-volume autobiography, or confessions, *Little Wilson and Big God* (1986) and *You've Had Your Time* (1990). In the first book, Burgess describes his position as a college student: "There was no answer to the world's problems in communism, and no personal salvation in Anglicanism. The solutions probably lay with renegade Catholic liberal humanism." He adds that, fifty years later, he has not much changed this view. Despite years away from the church, including a time when he considered converting to the austerity of Islam, Burgess maintains, in the end, that "one can't throw away the Eucharist so easily." Both resentment of and respect for the institutional church come through in one of Burgess's comments on James Joyce's work, in his excellent introductory book *ReJoyce* (1965). He writes: "The church stands that it may be battered, but the fists that batter know their own impotence." To simply ignore, take a neutral stance, or choose a less troubling substitute for the church does not occur to Burgess.

In Joyce, Burgess found a Catholic writer he could take seriously. (Reading *A Portrait of the Artist* when he was a teenager, he was temporarily terrified back into the church, but Joyce's writing meant more to Burgess as a novelist than as coreligionist. Studying *Finnegan's Wake* was a lifelong project.) Of the great English Catholic modern writers he writes with less admiration, "The converts can look back to a family history graced by the economic rewards of Protestantism and to the advantages of an education provided by a Protestant establishment. They converted in a cool time." Although readers will see themes (such as guilt) in common, Burgess does not recognize his faith or culture in Graham Greene's or Evelyn Waugh's fiction. He attributes this to class prejudice: "It evidently hurt Waugh deeply that his typical fellow-worshipper should be an expatriated Irish laborer and that the typical minister of the church should be a Maynooth priest with a brogue." Yet Burgess rails elsewhere against the church's prevailing tackiness—"debased Baroque, debased Rococo...the small church with its incense, with its horrible little paintings, and horrible little statues"—as if aesthetic outrage accounts for his own disaffection. In any case, Burgess's family background and childhood experience gave him an acute sense of being an outsider in his own land, even though he lived abroad most of his adult life. Many of his characters, through temperament, ancestry, immigration, or accident, find themselves in similar situations; it is one of Burgess's accomplishments to have developed his "outsiders" from stock figures (e.g., the colonial abroad; the working-class man with a brain) into vehicles for examining our appalling century.

Burgess returns frequently to the contrasting world views of Pelagianism and Augustinianism to structure his fiction. Often, one misguided character represents the former, while the narrator or main character represents, or comes to see the truth of, the latter. Pelagianism, based on the opinions of the British heretic Pelagius, denies the necessity of grace, putting instead too much faith in human beings' capacity to exercise free will for the good.

In Burgess's view, liberals take the Pelagian wrong turn, failing to recognize that education, individual effort, and government oversight cannot correct the world's problems. The Augustinian view, perhaps closer to Burgess's own, insists that Original Sin leads humans inevitably into evil. Pelagian and Augustinian come into conflict, and in *The Wanting Seed* (1962), into alternating periods of rule over a state overburdened with citizens. In this novel, a satirical "Malthusian strip-cartoon," the state combats overpopulation by rewarding infanticide, punishing the fertile, waging wars against imaginary enemies, encouraging homosexuality, and condoning cannibalism. The tactics vary according to the view that has come into the ascendancy: in the "Pelphase," optimism ultimately justifies a police state in which disappointment at human failings leads to repressive measures; a chaotic "Interphase" results from the relaxation of sanctions; and the "Gusphase" follows, its philosophical pessimism to be undermined by the surprising fact that people behave better than they ought to, given their innate depravity. Burgess writes, "We tend to Augustinianism when we are disgusted with our own selfishness, to Pelagianism when we seem to have behaved well. Free will is of the essence of Pelagianism; determinism...of Augustinianism." Round and round we go, with no way out, and no solution, especially as we will never know how free we really are, given Original Sin.

The fundamental article of Burgess's faith is that free will defines humanity (in this he resembles Pelagians), so he represents the curtailment of choices as fundamentally wrong. In *A Clockwork Orange*, Burgess reprehends behaviorist conditioning (the delinquent narrator is compelled to watch films of atrocities after receiving a drug that induces nausea), for its infringement of free will. The once ultra-violent Alex can no longer react with the badness of the self, which was made by

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"Bog or God." Ultimately Alex is deprogrammed, so that he may enjoy music and elect to kick, murder, and rape again. Whether Alex could ever choose to be good depends on which version of the novel you read. For the American edition, the last chapter was chopped off; Burgess explains that the structure of the book, in three sections of seven chapters, adds up to twenty-one, the traditional number of maturity. With only twenty, you miss Alex "renouncing violence as a childish toy." Even without the ending, however, Burgess makes it plain in *A Clockwork Orange* that goodness is no virtue if it has not been chosen and that the state's attempt to eliminate evil is an assault on the self.

One of Burgess's very best novels, *Earthly Powers* (1980), takes up the Augustinian/Pelagian antithesis in a richer, fuller fiction. It brings together two characters, the narrator, Kenneth Toomey (a homosexual novelist, loosely based on W. Somerset Maugham), and his brother-in-law the pope, Carlo Campanati (loosely based on, and attacking, Pope John XXIII). The novel unfolds retrospectively as Toomey recounts in more than replete detail the events (personal, familial, literary, and world-historical) that lead to his giving of testimony regarding Don Carlo's miraculous healing of a child. Toomey, a popular writer and a rationalist, is exiled from the church because, as he sees it, God made him a homosexual. Ironically, he is the self-appointed Augustinian of the book, while the Holy Father Don Carlo seeks to advance the Pelagian cause through ecumenicism. The evidence suggests that Don Carlo is not a saint, but an agent of the devil. Toomey discovers that the child cured by Carlo grows up to be a Jim Jones-type, who massacres his misguided followers (including two of Toomey's relatives) in a eucharist of cyanide.

Carlo's attempt to reunify Christianity leads to another grisly communion, in which two more of Toomey's young relatives are eaten by cannibals at their celebration of the Eucharist. With mass suicide on one end and cannibalism on the other, the fruits of Pelagianism are realized in a sacrament that has become diabolical. Here Burgess's taste for ironies and inversion leads him once again to the Manichaean conclusion. Yet the author is more sly than this summary suggests; since readers derive their information from Toomey's colorful, exaggerated, and consciously crafted reminiscences, they may suspect that they are dealing with that modern creature, the unreliable narrator. Despite the implausibility, the conceit of a single mind encompassing the experience of modernity works because Toomey's recollection is broadly inclusive. He spills forth theological disputations, popular song lyrics, descriptions of his sister's fashionable outfits, and perfectly reproduced repartee from decades past. In *Earthly Powers* the imaginary and the incredible come together in a fabulous book.

Some readers have found *Earthly Powers* wearying—my father, for instance, can't get through it. Burgess's fictional output was so various and so plentiful that a reader who is irritated by the metafictional riddling of *MF* (1971) might still be delighted by the *Enderby* books (1963, 1968). The evocation of a not-so-distant lost world (the silent movies, popular songs, and favorite foods) in *The Pianoplayers* (1986) may appeal, though the speculations about Shakespeare's love-life and career appall, or vice versa. Reading around in Burgess is rewarding and often surprising. One of his most hilarious characters, the race-relations researcher Mr. Raj, transforms an otherwise unremarkable book about wife-swapping, *The Right to an Answer* (1960).

Since Burgess's vocabulary, his love of odd words, old words, off-the-beaten-track words, his fascination with foreign tongues, etymologies, and dialects, has the effect of encrusting his fiction with a scumbled surface of language, my own favorites tend to be those novels that can support and justify this layer of discourse. His novels about writers, real or invented, such as *A Dead Man in Deptford* (Marlowe), *Nothing Like the Sun* (Shakespeare), *Abba Abba* (Keats), the *Enderby* books (about a fictional poet), and *Earthly Powers* (Toomey, the writer of potboilers), make good vehicles for the Burgess lexicon. Certain pet words in that well-used and ever-burgeoning collection reveal Burgess's obsession with the body. To some extent he simply follows his master Joyce here, in representing the physicality of his fictional creatures. Yet he can hardly write a book without "emetic," "costive," "engorged," or "eructation." A concordance would embarrass not for what his characters' bodies do, but in what terms.

Repetition of material, from the level of the habitually used word, or irresistible epigram, or quick characterization, to the level of situations, events, and authorial hobbyhorses was Burgess's greatest weakness. When the repetition works within a novel as part of a "musical" structure, it is a desirable part of form. But in the realm of content, repetitions seem lazy. How many female characters can demonstrate their slovenliness by picking their teeth with tram tickets before the reader wonders whether a different bad habit might do the trick as well? To learn the autobiographical source of the detail (in this case, Burgess's loathsome stepmother) makes the repetition appear compulsive.

Burgess was brave to have published his autobiographies, for he tempts his reader to see the thinly-disguised as merely thin, in some cases. And yet he lived such a fascinating life that even his worst autobiographical books (such as *Beard's Roman Women*, 1976) have interesting features. He made excellent use in his fiction of a life that took him from Manchester to Gibraltar to Malaya to Borneo, from England to the United States to Malta, Italy, Monaco, and Switzerland. It is difficult to place Burgess the novelist on the map of contemporary fiction—he moves around so much! This novelist, critic, composer, traveler, amateur linguist, teacher, citizen of the twentieth century possessed "a kind of catholic quality" in the breadth and inclusiveness of his interests. Burgess's books were written, he said, "not merely to earn bread and gin but out of a conviction that the manipulation of language to the end of pleasing and enlightening is not to be despised." He made a modest claim for a monumental career. □

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NEVER ON SUNDAYS

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO LEISURE?

EDWARD VACEK

In the 1950s, experts predicted that by the nineties we would all be working three or four days per week. Their predictions would have been right, if we had chosen to work fewer hours for the same level of productive output. We could be working only six months of the year. Their predictions would have been on target, if we had been satisfied to live at '50s standards. Instead, we chose to increase the amount we own and consume by two-fold. The major loss has been in our free time.

Most of us, if we are not unemployed, find that our lives are too busy. In her arresting book, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (Harvard, 1991), Juliet Schor documented how busy we Americans have become. We now work the equivalent of one month, 163 hours, *more* per year than we did twenty years ago. And those of us in manufacturing are annually on the job 320 hours more than our counterparts in France or Germany.

When we are not working, we devote substantial time to shopping. In comparison with Western Europeans, according to Schor, we Americans spend more than three times as many hours shopping. We also spend a greater percentage of the money we earn, not to mention a good bit of money we haven't yet earned. As a consequence, we are materially quite comfortable.

Leisure itself has become a busy, high-ticket activity. Many of us eat out frequently; we join health clubs equipped with elaborate exercise machines; we buy expensive home entertainment equipment; we take formerly undreamed-of vacations. We work long hours in order to be able to afford such costly leisure.

The proportion of families with both parents working has risen. Thus for many working parents (especially single parents), evenings and weekends have, as a consequence, become packed with shopping and household details. Even on the home-front, Schor argues, we have taken time saved through labor-saving devices, and we have spent it by setting higher standards of what shall count as a decent life, e.g., in cleanliness, health fitness, variety and quality of foodstuffs, or diversity of activities for children.

Curiously, our *self-stated* values are still "traditional." In ranking nine basic values, we prize materialistic concerns last. Eighty percent of us say that marriage and family are so important that we would willingly sacrifice work to spend more time with them. But, our actions do not follow our words. Parents spend, Schor observes, ten to twelve fewer hours per week with their children than they did twenty-five years ago. Our treasure is not where we say our heart is.

In this context, John Paul II's frequent admonitions against consumerism take on new force. Of course, for lots of people the problem is a lack of resources for even adequate living. But for many Americans, the problem is what the pope describes in *Sollicitudo rei socialis* as "superdevelopment." We buy and sell "with no other horizon than the multiplication or continual replacement of the things already owned with others still better." This practice, the pope claims, leads to dissatisfaction, "because one quickly learns...that the more one possesses, the more one wants, while deeper aspirations remain unsatisfied and even stifled."

In a word, the market economy creates *homo economicus*. The problem is not so much that we become slaves to instant gratification or idolators of our possessions; we need them in order to live and to give. But possessions and services are not enough, no matter how many of them we can afford. We need a wider array of human goods including personal relationships, above all, a relation with God.

Since we cannot be existentially attentive at every moment to all that we need, we must establish a *rhythm* in our lives, wherein in due course we attend to the basic goods that make life whole and meaningful. An earlier, easier age—only a few decades ago—provided one answer to these tensions: weekend

"Doesn't the phrase, 'Stop and smell the roses' mean anything to you?"

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Blake Leland

Gift

My curled fingers I
uncurl and an apple,
green with yellow
flecked, and ripe, rolls
out of my palm,
dips at the first joint,
over the rises of
flesh between first
knuckle and second,
rises too, and then
picks up speed
enough to clear,
arc-wise, my fingertips.

It is in the air
now, its fall's rate
fixed in all the
circumstance of
stars: their massed
effects I can't
calculate but
do rely upon;
and the light
the apple, tumbling,
does not take is
green flecked yellow for
our eyes only here.

Towards you it
arcs, falls, flickers
as it turns in air;
towards you it
rolls as it hits
the table, rattles,
a little, spoons and
cups as it runs,
skitters, weaves, then
wobbles and
stops.

It is for you. What
will you do with it?

rest and especially Sunday worship. Why has this solution itself become questionable?

People act for positive values, and so we have to ask whether we really want to be less busy. Too much of what we value in contemporary life might have to be given up. On the other hand, it may be that we are not leading the lives we want. Social changes often occur through an accumulation of small decisions, each of which seems good, but which accumulate in social patterns that on the whole are undesirable.

What has changed? Only a few points can be made. We live in an intensified, liberal culture in which devotion to individual freedom challenges any restriction on economic activity. Modern economic freedom argues that we should be able to work and shop when and how long we want; those who don't want to work or shop can simply refrain. So the argument goes.

Things are to the contrary, Schor and many others argue. Studies consistently show that most workers do not have great say about the hours they work. The threat of job loss and the decline of organized labor have meant that management decides when and how long people work. Management itself is under great pressure to work longer hours. The competitive nature of the market system promotes not only individual initiative but also increased interest in getting ahead. Even in the midst of great unemployment, there have been few proposals to reduce the work week so as to spread the work among more people.

Americans also lean toward an industrial and scientific mindset, each of which has an undifferentiated sense of time. Unlike human beings, the machine does not need to rest, reflect, pray, or play. Since the industrial revolution, clock time has tended to override human rhythms. And, speaking generally, science does not know any special times or days of the week. The *Starship Enterprise* has no holy days.

Another factor is that the status of work has been upgraded. To be sure, work for many is drudgery. For other people, however, work provides a great sense of meaning, worth, companionship, and accomplishment not found in other areas of life. Rest from work can seem to threaten these values, and it can feel like negligence in not doing our part to keep the economy flowing.

The status of play has also undergone an upswing. Play, which was often frowned upon in the tradition, has become an important form of recreation, even as it now competes for our time. Parents often have to choose on Sunday mornings between church and sports for their kids. The Vatican itself cited weekend vacations and skiing as reasons for instituting Saturday evening Mass. Even shopping has become for many a form of recreation. The chance to walk through tastefully decorated shops, to gaze at goods that stimulate the imagination, and to satisfy our desires: all these bring pleasure to people. And if pleasure doesn't bring us to the stores, the desire to keep up with others will. All these activities consume our time.

Despite what people say about their desire for family, centrifugal forces often overwhelm centripetal desires. Family cohesion has declined, as each member of the family pursues his or her own unique interests. Most of us no longer live within older social networks such as small towns, ethnic cultures, or

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extended families. We have become accustomed to living in small families whose members are encouraged to pursue their own interests. Not so long ago, the Carnegie Institute recommended that parents resign themselves to being clearing-house managers of their children's activities outside of the home.

We might be better off if collectively we slowed down, but, absent communal discernment and cooperation, we end up creating a way of life that drives us on. Individuals must swim in the fast-flowing stream or drop out altogether.

Not only are there cultural reasons for working more and being busier than we say we would like to be; some religious restraints against work and possessions have been left behind. A common justification of Sunday rest pointed to the Third Commandment. It is a theological mistake, however, to confuse the Sabbath with the "Lord's Day." The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, theologically selected because on that day Yahweh rested (Exod. 20:11). Christians observe a different day, Sunday, and for a different reason, the Resurrection. They also follow different rules—Christians allow what is explicitly forbidden by the Hebrew Bible. In the early centuries, most Christians worked on Sundays. Further, Christians claim that all days are holy, not just one day. Through Christ's victory, Christians have felt themselves freed, in varying degrees, from observing the Third Commandment.

What was admirable about the tradition is how it protected manual laborers. In past Catholic teaching, it was permitted on Sundays to write a book, but not to plant a small garden, to crochet but not to knit. In sexist fashion, Sunday rest tended to benefit men more than women whose work was never done. Such rules too severely constricted Christian freedom, and they have been greatly abandoned. Furthermore, the pre-Vatican II casuistry of what constituted forbidden work on Sunday became unbelievable, especially as more people did white-collar and service work.

In Western Catholicism, work was long evaluated mainly in negative or utility terms. In recent times, however, Vatican II and John Paul II have stressed that work is intrinsically valuable. Moreover, it is through work and the wages we earn that most of us are able to make a contribution to religious institutions and social justice concerns. We also view possessions less as dangers to our salvation and more as gifts from God. The church regularly defends the right to private property, and, as John Paul II writes in *Sollicitudo*, "the goods of the world and the work of our hands...serve for the coming of the *definitive Kingdom*." Refusing these goods and ceasing from work, then, can seem to be a failure to cooperate with God in fostering the kingdom.

What values of our past Sabbath and Sunday observance deserve to be promoted in our time? Since we are more than economic beings, we need to resist unfettered economic activity which currently threatens to swamp the other areas of our lives. We all need a *rhythm* of life that includes more than working and spending. Such surcease is itself liberation. We need time to be quiet, to reflect, to read, to explore the meaning and purpose of our lives. We need time to reassess our priorities and summon the courageous resolve to enflesh them. We need time to be with one another. We have a deep need to pass time in receptive communion with God. In quiet time, we participate in that rest in which even God engages in. These needs or hungers cannot be satisfied without spacious periods of restfulness.

Too much work can deaden our spirits; or it can become the controlling center of our emotional energy. In either case, we need a respite from work. Jesus proclaimed, "what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?" Work is a good, a subordinate good. We work to live; we work to fulfill ourselves; we work to contribute to others and to the world; we work to cooperate with God: our appreciation of these meanings of work will likely fade unless there is time to reflect.

There is, of course, no simple formula that will establish the proper balance between economic activity and other goods. Nevertheless, through discussion and experience, individuals and communities must chart the general pattern these various human goods should have in their lives. Consumerism and the consuming "progress" it generates are not essential traits of human nature, but products of our market-driven culture. Many societies have happily existed without these pressures. Churches must help us resist the temptation to become *homo economicus*. They must find a way to encourage us to effectively want leisure and rest. These values cannot be imposed by rules. A suitable rhythm of life must be discovered by the human heart, through individual and communal experience.

We need not invent such a rhythm. Currently, in our collective psyche, the weekend is a time for relaxing; it is a time for worship and for family life. It is also a time for regeneration and a feeling of satisfaction in the work we have done. The deep social structure of weekends, including Sunday's rest and worship, still prevails, however growing the number of exceptions. The question, of course, is whether further change in our practices, further exceptions, will eventually make this background pattern obsolete. If weekends are just days to catch up on unfinished tasks, they become one more busy period, not a time for refreshment and perspective.

The Code of Canon Law sets up an ideal that most of us can affirm. It describes Sunday as a "Feast Day," and after asking the faithful to participate in the Mass, it says (canon 1247), "they are also to abstain from those labors and business concerns which impede the worship to be rendered to God, the joy which is proper to the Lord's Day, or the proper relaxation of mind and body." The new code, in effect, asks us to test whether what we do on weekends promotes certain important values we can all assent to. Furthermore, the change since 1964 to allow Saturday evening Mass indicates that considerable flexibility is thinkable. If Sundays must be busy, then, without prejudice to the communal ideal, other times for worship and rest should be sought. The values involved are too important to be allowed

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to drown in the whirlpool of busyness.

What is needed is an awareness that each of us needs a *rhythm* of life that includes rest, prayer, and play. Play has a healing, recreative power, and when shared with others it creates and deepens interpersonal relationships. Prayer and rest provide us with the context within which we can appreciate the gratuitous and grace-like quality of life. "Idleness" can be the devil's workshop, but it is also the contemplative's family room.

The deep human need for something like a weekend rhythm should become socially affirmed, as it is in Europe. The European comparison, of course, makes clear that more time does not automatically translate into greater church attendance. Still, the structuring of time should be not only an individual decision, but also a political act. It helps define what counts as valuable for us. If we structure our collective time so that economic activities are always encouraged, then we signal that these activities are too important to ever be displaced.

In a modern time frame, any hour and any day is the same as any other hour or day. All is determined by the interests of individuals. Then, without background patterns shared in common, individuals seem most free since most unconstrained. They can do what they want, either privately or as long as they find someone else willing to satisfy their wants. But this is not a good formula for social life and therefore, in the long course, not for individual life.

A community is more than an economic unit. This is an identity too small, too constricting for its members. There is a communal need for communal leisure, a leisure that is not the same as each individual taking the time that she or he needs. There must be background patterns, publicly supported and encouraged, that promote communal leisure. The traditional weekend with its focus on Sunday is one such pattern, and it deserves shoring up. One of religion's social tasks is to resist the tendency of people in affluent individualist cultures to devote themselves wholly to private economic gain. Through its public proclamation and practice, Christianity can contribute to society by insisting that individually and communally we develop a rhythm of life that includes all the human goods and relationships that make life more than just getting and spending, getting and spending, getting.... □

SCREEN

SAINTLY SYBARITE

SPIELBERG'S SCHINDLER

Since Oskar Schindler was the most magnificent con man who ever lived, a scam artist who bilked the Third Reich of the pleasure of torturing and killing more than eleven hundred human beings, it should not surprise us that he left a trap as his bequest to anyone trying to tell the story of his achievement. All honor then to director Steven Spielberg and scriptwriter Steven Zaillian (and, of course, Thomas Keneally, whose novel they adapted) for avoiding that trap, for succeeding in drawing from the contortions of Schindler's life and the horrors he surmounted, a movie that is always art, and sometimes great art.

What is the trap? Oskar Schindler was enormously attractive. He was attractive to men as a drinking buddy and raconteur, to women as a lover. Any storyteller worth his salt must reproduce that enveloping charm on the page or screen, or *there simply is no story to tell*, for charm (abetted by bribes) was Oskar's weapon of weapons. Charm made him a successful salesman for an electrical company in the economically depressed Central Europe of the late twenties; charm kept him out of the German army; charm gained him charge of the Cracow factory that made mess kits and field kitchenware and that earned Schindler a fortune. And Oskar's charm and money seduced Nazis into allowing him to siphon off the Jews of the neighboring workcamp of Plaszow into his factory. Forty-five workers at first, then two hundred and fifty, and finally, once Schindler had acquired a "subcamp" of his own, more than eleven hundred lives were held in the nicely manicured hands of this admirable fraud who kept them safe and never let even one slip through his fingers.

But Oskar's charm is the trap! It entrances us from beyond the grave. Not only Keneally (who has the excuse of being a novelist imagining his way under the skins of his characters) but any journalist, historian, or critic writing about this entrepreneur soon starts calling him Oskar. Indeed, one wants to have known him and to have witnessed him luxuriating in his success, gloating in the glory of his fancy cars and expensive clothes, holding his cigarette at that peculiarly Central European, forty-five-degree angle while scanning all the beautiful women in the dining room of some expensive restaurant. Suave Oskar, courteous Oskar, unfailingly adept Oskar is so much more gratifying to be with than....

Than the Jews he rescued. For prolonged, atrocious suffering does not render people pathetically attractive or lovable, though we may love and pity them anyway. Starvation and fear loosen bowels, create nasty smells, monotonous speech, lusterless eyes, ferret-like behavior. So, hide those Jews from us, Mr. Moviemaker, and spare our tender sensibilities. Well,

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don't conceal them entirely, for then we would have no one on hand for Oskar to rescue. Just keep them at a distance, in the background, in the shadows. Coax them into camera view when it is time for Our Hero to do his stuff, and then whisk them out of sight when they have served their purpose.

It's clear that Steven Spielberg was excited by Schindler's heroism for he cinematically glories in his protagonist's swashbuckling machinations. The scene in which the industrialist swoops down on a table of Nazis and their women and soon has them literally eating out of his hands is a triumph of leaping, synoptic editing: the rhythm emulates Oskar's dazzling bonhomie. But Spielberg has resisted making Schindler a star turn surrounded by supernumeraries. Instead, he has created a concerto. In any good concerto, the orchestra doesn't merely support the single instrument but creates the sonic world that gives the soloist a sonic destiny. In *Schindler's List*, the virtuosic con man finds his moral destiny and salvation in the world of suffering experienced by the Cracow prisoners. *En masse*, these victims become a character just as important as Schindler. This is their story as much as his. Spielberg and Zaillian and Keneally never let us forget that.

But nobody experiences suffering *en masse* but in his own body, in her own mind. Spielberg's camera isolates the face of an old man awaiting execution, the empty sleeve of a person whose armlessness cost him his life (one-armed people produce less slave labor), rivulets of blood in the corridor of a ghetto tenement, the upturned face of a child, up to his chest in the excrement of the jakes where he is hiding. Another director might have extracted a sentimental pornography out of all this woe, but in Spielberg's hands everything contributes to an overall feeling of monumental suffering.

Yet the avoidance of one trap leads perilously close to another. Against all this anguish, unflinchingly staged, must not Schindler's sleek, sexually busy existence seem an affront, no matter how great the man's heroism?

My answer is simple: no. This is a story not of unalleviated suffering but of succor and rescue. In any such story, the rescuer inevitably attracts the attention of the viewer precisely because he is in action, moving and transforming instead of awaiting and enduring.

Thoughtful people are coming out of this movie praising it but troubled by the question, "When did Schindler change? What was the motive for his self-sacrifice?" Which is perhaps just another way of asking the question, "How *can* this beefy sensualist be allowed as the hero of this movie if we can't clearly be shown the exact moment of conversion from sybarite to savior?"

Well, if you must have a turning point, there is the moment when Schindler sees from a hilltop the decimation of the Cracow ghetto and spots a little girl in a red coat. The moment is piercing because that red appears on the canvas of a black-and-white movie. (Horribly, that red will reappear later on a cart of corpses.) But that's only (only!) a moment of anguished realization on Oskar's part that he must act soon and radically. It's not really a turnaround of character, just an intensification of a concern he has already felt. So, again, where does Schindler's goodness come from?

We ask that question because we think we know what goodness looks like. It looks like Gandhi, skinny in his loincloth, or Mother Teresa, unostentatious in her nun's habit. Goodness doesn't gourmandize or sleep with pretty Polish stenographers. Since Oskar Schindler never puts on a loincloth or goes on a fast or pays the least attention to his marital vows, how can we pinpoint his conversion?

We can't. We can't because there is no fundamental conversion, only an ignition of a virtue that was waiting to be ignited. In truth, Schindler's goodness was aborning in the pleasure he took in food, in his several expensive cars, and, yes, in the beauty of the women he drafted into his personal seraglio. Godless, unstirred by and uncomfortable with ideas and ideals, unshakably a hustler to the very last day of his life, Schindler could imagine heaven only as a place here on earth, and he couldn't bear that anyone in his purview be forced to live in a hell on earth. The Final Solution affronted his pleasure-instinct. Oskar Schindler is the saint of sybarites.

He is played by Liam Neeson, all silk and steel. There is a line of Keneally's that Neeson must have contemplated during his preparation for this role: "Oskar murmured away in that peculiar rumble of his which could at the same time contain threat and bonhomie." Not only his voice but Neeson's entire characterization is that compound. In the sequences in which Schindler moves against his foes, Neeson propels his big frame forward like a tank and, in some shots, recalls the legendary hulks of German cinema's golden age, Emile Jannings or Werner Krauss. There are even times when he looks like Field Marshal Goering, a resemblance that carries its own mordant irony. But, courting women or Nazis, Neeson can be as debonair (and as much of a clothes horse) as Boyer or Redford. Up to now a specialist in attractive weaklings, Neeson allows no fissure to show in Schindler until his very last scene. But, when it comes, that breakdown is harrowing, a sudden fit of self-accusation in front of the people he has saved. In its mixture of self-revulsion and compassion, and in its over-the-top emotionality, the scene is Dostoevskian.

This movie is so good that it demands the ultimate judgment: Is it not only a movie of movies but among the best works of art in any medium?

I think the answer is no.

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As long as *Schindler's List* is, it's not long enough. (It really could have been a TV miniseries.) Spielberg tries to pack in nearly all the complexities Keneally found and consequently often skims rather than delves. This skimming mars the most fascinating relationship in the film, Schindler's friendship with Goeth, the commandant of the Plaszow prison camp (harrowingly played by Ralph Fiennes as a nihilistic baby). An entire movie could have been made about just these two men, and a full-scale contrast might have told us something startling about the human condition, for Goeth's evil is a materialism turned murderous as surely as Schindler's goodness is sensuality enacting itself as altruism. But Spielberg has dozens of other dramatic areas to cover and so he moves on, leaving us tantalized rather than enlightened. Also skimmed: the character of Schindler's wife who was as tough and enterprising as her husband and virtually ran the subcamp on the numerous occasions when her husband was being interrogated by the Gestapo.

One final thing must be said against this movie but it is no slur on Spielberg's individual artistry; it's rather a reservation about the capability of fiction in dealing with the Holocaust. The very greatest films on this subject—the twenty-minute *Night and Fog* of Alain Resnais or the seven-hour *Shoah* of Claude Lanzmann—are all documentary evocations of horror rather than reproductions. They vividly allude to the evils perpetrated and thereby spur us to imagine the horrors for ourselves. When Lanzmann's camera stares at the now empty trains that once transported Jews, or at the faces of survivors and witnesses, the spirit of evil seems to materialize before our eyes. In *Schindler's List*, we are always silently murmuring our astonishment at the filmic skill deployed on the recreation of horrors. But, in *Shoah*, skill disappears and we seem to be in the very presence of enormity.

These necessary ingratitudes I have just expressed are part and parcel of my much larger gratitude to Steven Spielberg for making this movie. Though the best, alas, is always the enemy of the good, *Schindler's List* is very good indeed. It is splendid.

RICHARD ALLEVA

MEDIA

THE McCONNELL QUAKES

THE ELECTRONIC HEARTH BLAZES

Monday, January 17, 1994, 4:32 A.M. The McConnell, back late Sunday night from an exhausting New York meeting of the National Book Critics Circle, is sleeping soundly, dreaming—he hopes—of Audrey Hepburn. His wife Celeste starts up in bed, says "Earthquake!" and leaves the room. The McConnell, perhaps at least in part because Celeste so much resembles Audrey, slips happily back into REM placidity.

At 9:15 A.M., finding himself being groomed by an adoring half-Siamese kitten, he comes to full—such as it is—consciousness. Slouching kitten-from and kitchen-ward for coffee, he passes the den where Celeste and his mother-in-law, Dolores, are watching TV, expressions rapt and anxious. *Dolores*? Oh, yeah: during his NYC junket, Celeste had had her mother come up to stay with her in Lompoc. Lompoc is 150 miles from L.A. Her father, Carl, stayed behind in their home in Agoura; and Agoura is *in* L.A.: did somebody say something about a quake? Coffee. The One Thing Needful right now is coffee.

Californians, most of the time, maintain or impersonate a throwaway sangfroid about quakes, a what-the-hell nonchalance. The McC, after ten years in the state, does not. Quakes—except for dinosaur-killer meteors—are the last survival of what must have been humankind's aboriginal, god-spawning awe at a capricious, maybe malevolent Nature. Tornadoes and hurricanes, even to a degree droughts and floods, we can now map and predict; they're subsumed into the realm of human discourse; we can go to the cellar, stock up on canned soup, do whatever we can do to at least *try* to make it through. But a quake is like a unmotivated slap in the face, like what Abram must have felt when Yaweh, for no special reason, called him by name. Warning? Forget it. To experience a quake is to understand *Genesis*, and to parse Wallace Stevens's stunning observation that "The sea is a form of ridicule." For, in its bad moods, so is the earth.

And this was a Big One: six-point-something-*high* on the exponential Richter scale. And its epicenter (that's ground zero in quakespeak) was in Northridge: twelve miles, being generous, from Celeste's parents' home. Celeste, being like most wives more *there* than their husbands, had, feeling the faint tremor at 4:32, called her dad in Agoura to ascertain that he was still—well—alive, and he was. And only then had she awakened Dolores to tell her what had happened. What the McC would have done he chooses not to examine. (There's a serious reason for this obtrusively third-person narration, by the way: bear with me.)

So what do you do? You watch TV. By 9:00 A.M. the phone lines to L.A. that aren't down are as mobbed as O'Hare Airport on Christmas Eve. (Humans are wonderful: The guy comes on the Tube saying it's a serious emergency and we should all keep the lines clear, and what do folks do? Run to the phone, of course, to see if all the loved ones are okay.)

So the phones are down. The e-mail is down, and so is the Infonet. The planet has just rared up and bitten you on the ass. Who you gonna call? *Nobody*, Jim: you're gonna watch TV, as did, the whole day long, the McC and his worried wife and mother-in-law.

KNBC in Los Angeles, to be precise, where the day-long coverage was orchestrated by a very talented anchorman named—you gotta admire God's gift for irony—Kent Shockneck. Now self-appointed media pundits like Neil Postman and the appalling Mark Crispin Miller love to talk about the numbing, dehumanizing effect of the Tube, turning "real life" into mere entertainment: "Big Brother is you, watching," as Miller preppily sniffs. Maybe. Unless, as with

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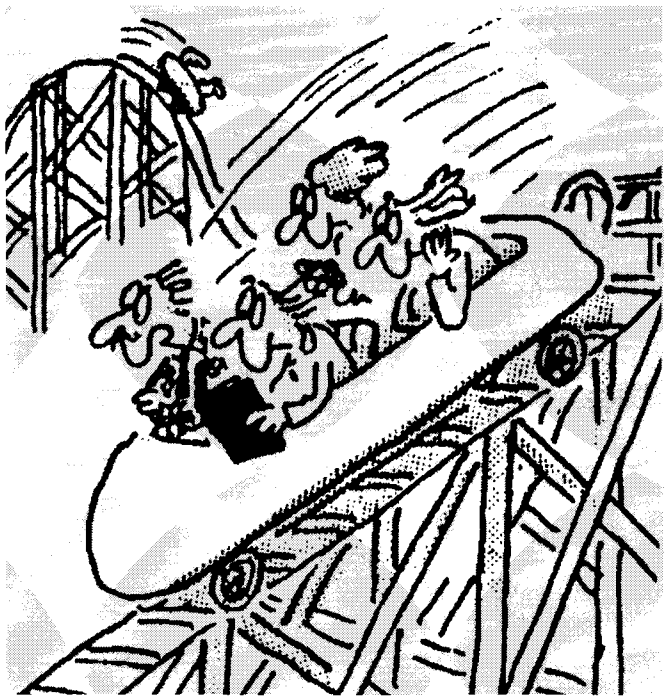
the quake, you're close to but too far from people you love who are in a disaster zone and you're worried sick because the aftershocks keep coming. ("Aftershock," by the way, is the PC of quakespeak, like calling "blind" "visually challenged": when you're in the damned thing, it's another earthquake.) *Then* there's nothing numbing about the Tube at all. It's an otherwise-impossible connection with the eye of the storm. It's a welcome palliative to anxiety: as long as the broadcast is *on* you know, at least, that L.A. hasn't been swallowed whole. It may not be McLuhan's idyllic global village, but it is something like the small-town thing where, when your house is struck by lightning, the neighbors come by just to let you know they're *there*. It comforts Celeste and Dolores and the McC is grateful.

And of course there's voyeurism involved: TV is, after all, a human medium, and since Lot's wife—the first TV junkie?—that's been one of our best things. At 2:45 P.M. the McC becomes angry. Some guy has been trapped in his car in a collapsed parking garage, his legs crushed. The paramedics have been trying for hours to break through the roof and get him out, all covered from a telecopter. And as they're about to make it, KNBC does a phone interview with "Doctor Bruce," some M.D. talking from his home miles away, about the varieties of trauma, for crying out loud, while the guy is still in pain, and when they finally get him out, the ground camera crew tries its level best to get the lens up his kazoo while he's gurneyed into the ambulance. "Prurience!" snorts the McC, "the pornography of catastrophe," and huffs back to the kitchen, not this time for coffee.

It's the sort of episode writers love to self-righteousize over: just look how the medium converts private pain into tawdry spectacle. But there is, really, a world of difference between this coverage and, say, the "reenactments" of "Hard Copy" or the endless sniggerings over Michael Jackson or Tonya Harding or the Bobbitts. For while the NBC crew was covering the rescue, they, and the viewers, and, yes, even Doctor Bruce were also, in a funny way, *being* covered. This is important.

I said before that quakes are a form of ridicule because they are unpredictable. So are presidential assassinations in Dallas, urban riots, and little girls fallen down wells. So is the sudden pain in my chest, or the inexplicable numbness in your left hand, or the tingle in your scalp as you look into her eyes and realize she doesn't love you anymore. They are the moments that escape, or shatter, the stories of our lives we are constantly telling ourselves, and for which another name is "consciousness." And at such moments we become *objective* to ourselves, as in: Damn! I'm no longer telling the tale of my life, the tale's telling me. So then, since we are *essentially* (Aristotle and Aquinas both missed this one, though Nietzsche came close) the storytelling animal, what we do is, we make up another story to fight back from the third-person to the first-person narration of our lives. In our private catastrophes, this is the motive—actually the survival-value—of every tale from *Gilgamesh* to this morning's installment of *Doonesbury* or for that matter *Mary Worth* (yeah: I never miss it).



"After the last few days this seems rather dull."

And it's why, no kidding, "I" became to a certain extent "the McConnell" on the morning of January 17—as did, with different agnominations, most of the inhabitants of Southern California: including the very people like the good Shockneck who were covering the quake even while they were in the midst of its chaos. What the Tube did for us all was, on one level, probably very like what happened when our hirsute ancestors huddled together in a cave during a thunderstorm, drawing bison on the walls and sharing bits of tapir meat or whatever. But on another level—and this is one of the very *fine* things about TV—it brought us together, reinserted each of us into our first-person mode of storytelling, faster and more gently than maybe any means of communication conceivable before the last forty years. The medium has taken a bad, and often deserved, rap for turning "history" into "entertainment." But I think it important to take note that, in events like the quake, the Rodney King riot, the *Challenger* disaster, *und so weiter*, it can also turn the unspeakable into the bearable: and that is a quintessentially human act.

In the smartest book I've ever read on TV, *No Sense of Place* (Oxford, 1986), Joshua Meyerowitz observes that the most important single bit of information transmitted by the six o'clock news is just that it does come on at six o'clock. When Dan or Tom or Peter materialize at precisely 1800 hours, you know that today, at least, the world has stayed within the track of the comprehensible. And conversely, when as on January 17 the world, or part of it, slips the rails, the medium can at its best be a *voice*—not entertainment, not news, not even "fact," but a voice—that by reminding us that we can say "we," helps each of us back to being able to say "I."

There are worse things the centrally human act of communication can do. Lots.

FRANK MCCONNELL

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Moving to 'el centro'

UTOPIA UNARMED
The Latin American Left after the Cold War
Jorge G. Castañeda
Alfred A. Knopf, $27.50, 498 pp.

Joseph A. Page

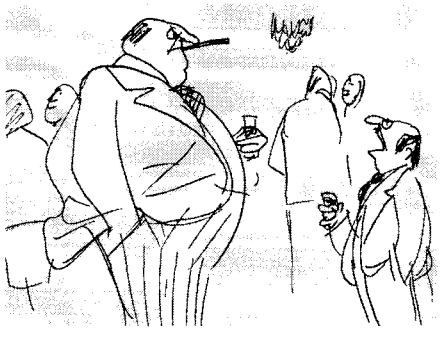
The three decades following Fidel Castro's triumphal entry into Havana on January 8, 1959, produced great hope and equally great frustration on the part of the Left in Latin America, with Salvador Allende's election as president of Chile and the coming to power of Nicaragua's Sandinistas as peaks, and the death of Che Guevara in Bolivia and the bloodbaths carried out by the Argentine, Brazilian, Chilean, and Uruguayan military as valleys. In their eagerness to emulate the Cuban revolution, many of the region's best and brightest young people took up arms and paid a stiff price, in the form of torture, imprisonment, and death. Workers and peasants who were persuaded to join in the struggle met similar fates.

The coda to this period was the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas on February 25, 1990 (although some may argue that the final note will not be struck until the Castro regime collapses). The contemporaneous disintegration of international communism, long a wellspring of intellectual and tactical support for Latin radicals, reinforced this downbeat finale.

Yet revolutionary and reformist movements emerging from the port side of the political spectrum have not vanished in Latin America, in large part because the economic and social injustices that gave these movements their *raison d'être* have not vanished. The strong showings by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Luís Ignácio Lula da Silva in recent presidential elections in Mexico and Brazil give some indication of the popular support still enjoyed by the Left. Moreover, resort to both organized and random violence continues, as the recent uprising in Mexico, the activity of Peru's "Shining Path" extremists, and the crime wave in urban Brazil—which amounts to *de facto* class warfare—amply demonstrate.

Moreover, the economic model that some Latin nations are now borrowing from the United States—with its emphasis upon deregulation, privatization, removal of trade barriers, and greatly elevated reliance upon market forces and private initiative—will in the short run impose even greater hardships upon the poor. In a part of the world where a large segment of the population falls below most definitions of the poverty level, policies that not only ignore but also exacerbate human misery seem hardly likely to appeal to a majority of voters.

Thus, a historic moment seems at hand for the Latin Left. Having learned of the futility of armed struggle, the virtues of democracy, and the weaknesses of the command economy, those who find the status quo unacceptable are in a position to reinvent themselves and develop credible alternatives to the conservative agenda. This gives them the opportunity to win fair and free elections. Moreover, in the post-cold war era they can expect to be able to govern without interference from Washington, so long as they maintain certain norms of behavior (such as the preservation of democratic institutions and respect for human rights).



"Less *power to you!*"

Jorge G. Castañeda, a Mexican political scientist with degrees from Princeton and the University of Paris, sets about to appraise this window of opportunity. In an ambitious, thoughtful, serious, and substantive endeavor, he describes how the Left brought upon itself, and then managed to survive, three decades of failure and frustration, and offers a detailed prescription for its future as a viable political force.

Utopia Unarmed is more successful in analyzing the policy options available to the Left than in describing revolutionary and reformist movements in the hemisphere. The latter segment of the book contains some troublesome errors and omissions. For example, the book begins with the story of the disappearance of $64 million in ransom money collected in 1974 by the Argentine Montoneros, a group of armed leftist youths, as an illustration of the complexity of the Latin Left, but fails to mention the strong evidence suggesting that the most prominent Montonero was a paid agent of the Argentine military regime.

Even more glaring is his neglect of the so-called "Democratic Left" in Latin America, a term applied to a group of reformist social or Christian Democrats such as José Figueres of Costa Rica, Rómulo Betancourt of Venezuela, and Eduardo Frei of Chile. This movement of the Center-Left faded when the Cuban revolution galvanized the continent, gained the unconditional support of the region's young people and intellectuals, and set off a process of radicalization that ventured even further to the Left than the traditional

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Communist parties were willing to go, and ultimately led to armed conflict in various parts of the region.

The Democratic Left tended to be anti-Communist and benignly disposed toward the U.S., which attracted for them the emnity of pro-Cuban revolutionaries. Yet there is an eerie similarity between some of the policies once advocated by these moderate leftists and the advice Castañeda now offers.

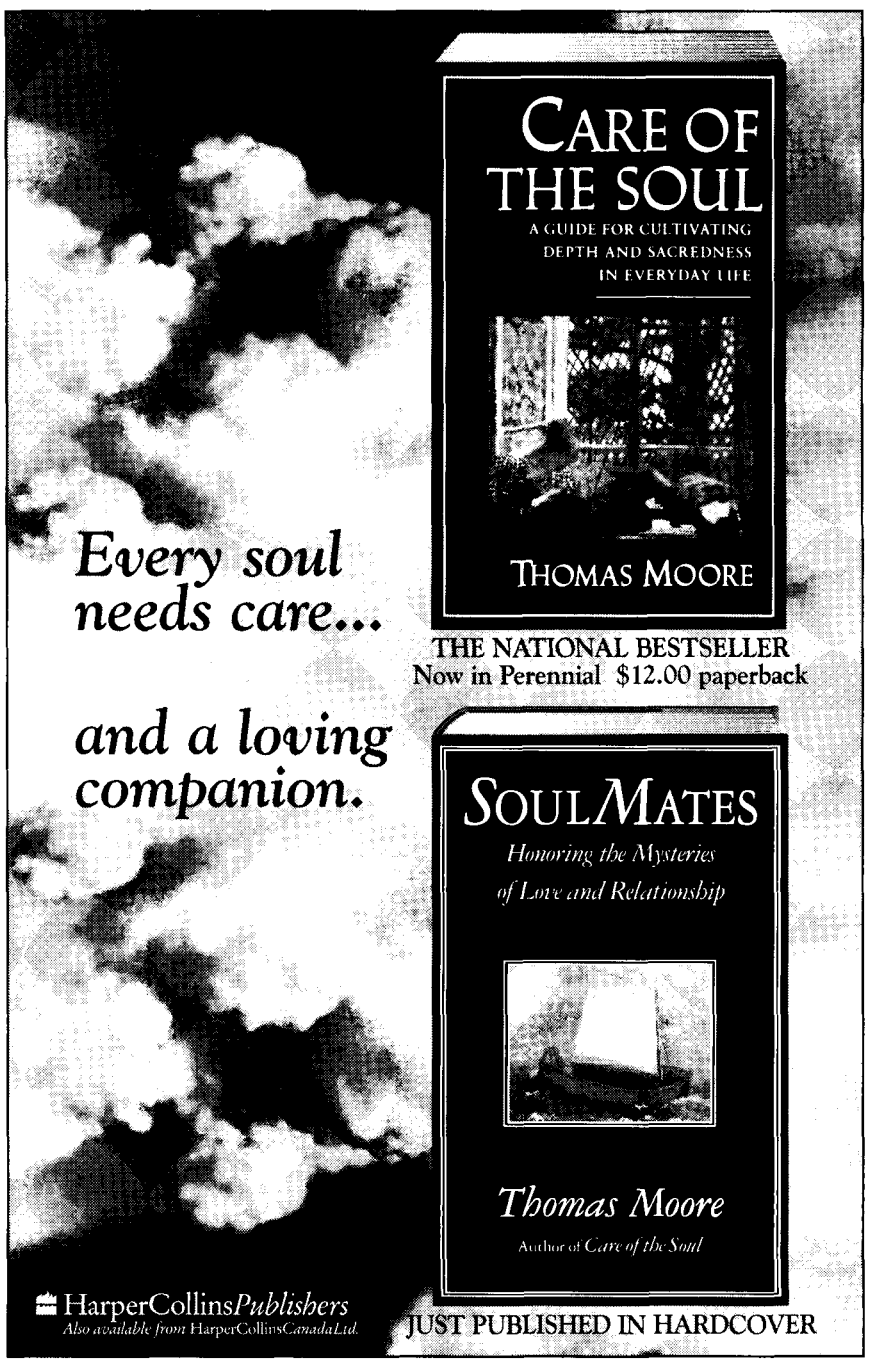
One convergence is respect for the electoral process. Castañeda points out that during the past several decades the pro-Castro Left harshly criticized democracy and labeled it a "sham." But the harsh lesson absorbed during this period was that undemocratic right-wing regimes devastated the Left, and it was only by forcing the return of representative democracy in countries lashed by dictatorships that the Left was able not only to survive but also to regain lost ground through a process of renewal.

Castañeda also addresses with admirable candor the need to solve the dilemma of how to encourage economic growth and at the same time foster economic and social justice. He recognizes that this growth must come from the dynamic potential of private enterprise, but that the stability necessary to facilitate business expansion cannot be maintained either in the face of widespread and widening disparities between rich and poor or under governments that prioritize wealth redistribution above all else. The latter only succeeds in convincing "haves" to ship their wealth abroad or even emigrate.

Other thorny problems from which Castañeda does not shrink include the need to redefine nationalism (here he suggests that the Latin Left cultivate progressives in the United States, but cautions that this is a two-way street and will require acceptance of a certain degree of accountability to sympathetic Americans); to form regional common markets (he opposes NAFTA and urges Latin nations to model their trading blocs after the European Economic Community); to rethink the role of the state (he urges a cautious, limited privatization and the development of a civil service that is professional and permanent, rather than transitory and predatory, as is the case today in most Latin countries).

The proposals Castañeda offers are plainly more moderate than the utopian vision that animated the Latin Left during the past three decades. The great irony is that his prescription amounts to a more radical version of what the old Democratic Left once advocated.

A shift closer to the center, as Castañeda urges, will draw a new Latin Left closer to a spot on the political spectrum occupied in the past by the old Democratic Left. It took the failures of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions and the armed struggles of the radical Left throughout the continent to demonstrate the relative advantages of a shift toward the center. If Latin-American radicals had not needed this lesson but had instead pressured the Democratic Left to move more vigorously in the pursuit of social and economic justice, they might have reached the same point on the political spectrum that Castañeda now urges them to occupy, and at a greatly reduced human cost. □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IS PORNOGRAPHY 'FREE SPEECH'?

ONLY WORDS
Catharine A. MacKinnon
Harvard University Press, $14.95, 152 pp.

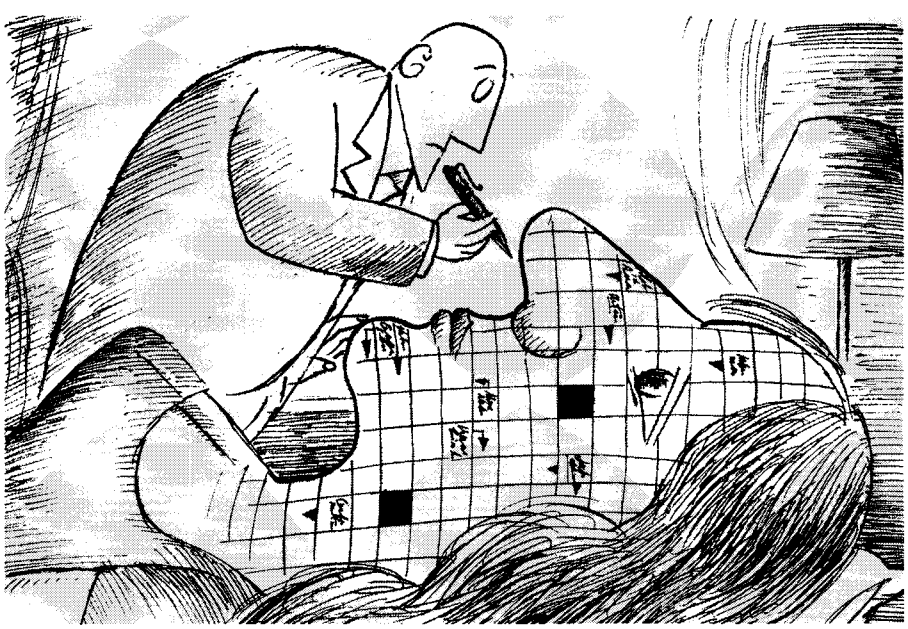
David McCabe

In case you haven't noticed, the old battle between pornography and community standards of decency is over; decency lost. While it is true that the Supreme Court has devised an elaborate (and largely irrelevant) test for obscenity, for the most part pornography seems to be here to stay. To no one is this fact more disturbing than University of Michigan law professor Catharine MacKinnon, the intellectual leader of what has come to be called the feminist critique of pornography. What distinguishes this critique from earlier "standards of decency" arguments is its insistence that pornography be banned because it contributes heavily to the continuing subordination and abuse of women. Through the work of writers like MacKinnon, this critique has largely succeeded in shifting the terms of the debate: no longer is it a question of liberated sexual mores confronting repressive puritanism; instead, the battle is now pitched between the pornographers' rights to free speech and the equality rights of women.

In her latest offering, *Only Words*, MacKinnon displays the passion, intelligence, and tinge of fanaticism that have made her such a potent force in the battle against pornography. While the book covers in some depth a broad range of issues, including racist speech and sexual harassment, the subject that dominates these pages is pornography, about which MacKinnon seems to know everything, from legal precedent to details of film production. The chief target of her attack here is the position that she calls First Amendment absolutism: the view that pornography is a form of speech between the producer and the consumer, and that the First Amendment prohibits any government interference with speech merely on grounds of content. This position also tends to be bolstered by vague warnings about starting down the slippery slope to government repression, the suggestion being that banning *Co-Ed Prison Sluts* leads inevitably to an Orwellian nightmare where we're all forced to do calisthenics in front of Big Brother and words like "dissent" and "criticism" have vanished from our dictionaries.

In the course of this book MacKinnon offers several arguments against this absolutist position, but her chief one appears to me utterly convincing. Even if pornography is a form of speech, says MacKinnon (which she doubts, suggesting instead that it communicates its ideas through a kind of "unconscious primitive conditioning"), this does not *tout court* mean that it cannot be regulated by the government. There are, in fact, several kinds of expression that the government has outlawed precisely because of the content they convey: for example, saying "We serve only whites here," or "If you sleep with me I'll give you a promotion," are speech acts which are clearly outlawed because they are recognized not as *only words*, but as *acts* of discrimination and harassment. Nobody claims that because speech is the medium for these acts, they therefore merit First Amendment protection, nor does anyone reasonably suggest that their prohibition brings us closer to the totalitarian nightmare. In these cases the right to free speech is simply outweighed by the clear social interest in eliminating racial discrimination and sexual harassment.

MacKinnon does a fine job of revealing the confusion and shallow thinking implicit in the reflexive appeals to free speech offered by many defenders of pornography. But notice: her argument has shown that pornography *may*, under certain conditions, be restricted. It has not yet shown that it *should* be restricted. In order to establish this further point, she must show that pornography in fact systematically harms women. Here I think she needlessly confuses her argument by stressing that some pornography is made from child abuse and some from actual rapes and tortures. That this goes on is obviously horrifying, but it is equally obvious that no one is arguing for the legality of these actions, and the polemical element introduced by these facts muddies the clarity of her overall case. MacKinnon is more persuasive, I think, when citing the recent court decisions in the U.S. and Canada, and the growing sociological literature, that acknowledge pornography's



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causal role in women's subordination and abuse, though here too the evidence is more ambiguous than she admits.

Two other weaknesses deserve mention, though they are primarily sins of omission. First, one wishes that MacKinnon had devoted more space to showing that her definition of pornography (explicit sexual material that subordinates women) is precise enough so that judges can apply it without making difficult aesthetic analyses about the *real* meaning of a work. A second problem involves the blurry distinction MacKinnon draws between "debating and expressing" obnoxious ideas (which she seems to want to tolerate) and "imposing" discrimination through "expressive" means. Each of these problems involves the difficulty of drawing clear boundaries, and while it is true that the cry "But where do you draw the line?" is frequently the refuge of idiots, in matters of free speech this difficulty merits special concern. It is useful to remember that we value free speech because of other things it secures—things like political accountability, artistic achievement, self-determination—and what is missing from this book, with its welcome emphasis on social equality, is any real acknowledgment of the importance of these other goods.

These failings aside, MacKinnon is on the whole quite persuasive in arguing that we need to rethink our approach to the pornography debate, and this important and thoughtful book should further that goal. Readers should be cautioned, however; though quite short, *Only Words* is not an easy read. Some of the challenges it presents are inevitable and arise from the complexity of the issues and the complicated legal precedents MacKinnon cites. But it must be said that MacKinnon's often inelegant prose presents challenges of its own. Many of her readers, I fear, simply will not finish sentences like the one that begins, "Sexual harassment, because it is sexual, and because of the place of words and images in sex, and the place of sex in life, manipulates the perpetrator's socialized body relatively primitively and directly," and this will not help her cause.

Given the sheer brainpower on display here, however, stylistic criticisms are relatively small potatoes. In the end, the effort to make sense of this book more than pays off. Having struggled through complex arguments and occasionally torturous prose, one is finally rewarded with the understanding that results only from having engaged in dialogue with a serious thinker working to clarify the central issues of an often murky but highly relevant area of debate. This is something we are all in need of, and *Only Words* delivers the goods. □

REVIEWERS

JOSEPH A. PAGE, *a professor at the Georgetown University Law Center, is at work on* The Brazilians, *to be published by Random House.*

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CATHOLICS ON THE RIGHT

CATHOLIC INTELLECTUALS AND CONSERVATIVE POLITICS IN AMERICA, 1950-85
Patrick Allitt
Cornell University Press, $29.95, 306 pp.

Mary Jo Weaver

Patrick Allitt's fascinating book on conservative Catholic intellectuals makes an important contribution to the history of American Catholicism from the confident fifties to the unsettling eighties. The painful irony at the heart of this study is related to timing: "the centrality of Catholicism to the conservative movement diminished just as the movement itself was coming to power." Allitt raises some suggestive questions about the intellectual genealogy of the next generation of conservative Catholics and should interest historians and interpreters of American Catholic culture.

In the swaggering years following World War II, conservativism, if known at all, was perceived as a generally harmless pastime for those who had missed the last train to the future. Allitt shows how the conservative movement—a coalition of Catholics (for example, William F. Buckley, Jr., Brent Bozell, Garry Wills, John Noonan), libertarian capitalists (Murray Rothbard, Frank Chodorov, Henry Hazlitt), and disillusioned former communists (Max Eastman, James Burnham, Will Herberg)—grew into the dominant cultural philosophy of the eighties. The Catholic thinkers, by far the largest part of the new movement, drew their political convictions from their religious beliefs. Their assumptions about an inherently imperfect human nature, an objective moral order, and an indispensable tradition clustered around a set of "family values" and natural law principles.

This small but influential group of thinkers, which gained prominence in the fifties, set a pattern that is being repeated in the nineties. Their movement was dominated by laymen (like John Noonan, Ross J.S. Hoffman, and Francis Graham Wilson) whose faith gave them a way to think about the world and to propose solutions to its most vexing problems. They were deeply Catholic and politically conservative. Some like Russell Kirk were converts and many like Garry Wills were capable of writing the kind of provocative prose that drew public attention. As we look back at members of this group—many of them still active—we see a portrait of the movers and shakers of the Catholic right wing, though many of us did not know there *were* left and right wings in the fifties.

Many Catholics who grew up before Vatican II remember the Catholic church as prosperous, self-assured, and monolithic, a faithful flock guided by a united hierarchy. One of the merits of this book is its ability to show the hidden fissures in this granite façade. If Catholics were united against communism, they were divided about McCarthy, the Spanish Civil War, and eventually, in more visible and inexorable ways, about Vietnam.

Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics is a tantalizing account of the men and matters of an earlier time, and an introduction to the resurgence of a Catholic conservative movement in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Yet the structure of the book is uneven because Allitt's task is enormous: he traces a movement from the fifties through the eighties and suggests some links between a pre- and postconciliar conservative Catholicism. That story—the one which traces more precisely the intellectual ancestry of a new generation of Catholic conservatives—remains to be told and we can only hope he is working on a sequel.

The first four chapters, an intellectual history of Catholic conservatives from the early fifties through the sixties, introduce a generation of "lost" thinkers (and lost causes) to postconciliar Catholics. More importantly, these early chapters show how *political* events before the sixties (like McCarthyism or support for Franco) set off the first depth charges that would bring down the rock face of Catholic conviction and splinter the burgeoning conservative movement. As long as Catholic conservative intellectuals could assume that they shared the same religious convictions, they were united around political questions. In the postconciliar uproar, however, a minority faction (led by Buckley's brother-in-law, Brent Bozell) chose issues more for their religious significance rather than for their political importance. *Triumph*, Bozell's magazine, "became a bulwark of Hispanophile Catholics" and Bozell moved his family to Spain because, "you breathed the Catholic thing there." "For Buckley and the majority, the conservative political program seemed

"Know what this campaign needs? A Republican pope."

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the most important issue; for others, religious purity in the face of ever-more threatening contaminants had to take precedence." The monumental changes in the church that accompanied Vatican II, therefore, hastened the conservative divide.

The minority, those who were driven by a desire to preserve orthodoxy and religious order, took extreme measures: Walter Matt left the *Wanderer* to start the *Remnant*; H. Lyman Stebbins founded "Catholics United for the Faith"; and Bozell left the *National Review* to begin *Triumph*. Their political causes—Carlist Spain, for example, or Diem's regime in Vietnam—were dictated by a perfervid anti-Communist Catholicism. Allitt carries the reader along the canyon rims of these divides so sensibly that it is a bit of a letdown when he shifts gears in the middle of the book.

Chapter 5, a transitional analysis of "sex, law, and nature," is meant to show how conservative Catholics responded to the birth control and abortion debates of the sixties and seventies. As a thematic rather than an analytical approach, it is not as fluid as previous chapters. Chapters 6 and 7, written to test the generalizations of the first half of the book—that the conservative movement generated by Catholics broke apart before it could become effective on a national scale—do not work well either. In choosing two minor figures from the early fifties (Hungarian refugee intellectuals John Lukacs and Thomas Molnar) and two major figures from the sixties to the present (Garry Wills and Michael Novak), Allitt manages to set up interesting internal comparisons, but I do not see how they test his earlier assumptions.

The epilogue brings the story up to date from Novak's responses to the bishops' pastoral letters on peace and the economy, through a group of new Catholic journalists: Dale Vree and the *New Oxford Review*, E. Michael Jones and *Fidelity* magazine, James Sullivan and *Lay Witness* are the latter-day shapers of a new Catholic conservativism. Like their earlier counterparts, they see themselves "as a morally exalted outsider group." Distinct from the majority of the earlier group, however, their concerns are far more religious than political. The links between then and now, therefore, probably have less to do with the vibrant conservativism of William Buckley than with the defensive Catholicism of a marginal figure like Frederick Wilhelmsen (who today is one of the intellectual heroes of Christendom College). It may be too early to say.

This book is redolent with suggestive parallels and will, I hope, inspire others to venture into this territory. Allitt's occasional interpretive inadequacies should not take away from the fact that this is an important, deftly-written, and exquisitely useful book. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

Is 'Commonweal' Catholic?

Chicago, Ill.

To the Editors: Commonweal is much too important for American Catholicism, now revving into schism's second gear, not to represent the full breadth of our opinions. That is why editor Margaret O'Brien Steinfels merits several *brave* for a noticeable move toward (a) catholicity—e.g., the inclusion of Janet Smith's essay in the forum on *Veritatis splendor* [October 22, 1993]; (b) independence—e.g., the editor's "Notebook" taking issue with Anna Quindlen on the bishops and Catholics for a Free Choice [January 14]; and (c) self-critical humor—her quip in the same column about "our remaining readers." Both for the sake of Catholicism and for *Commonweal*'s own sake, the magazine's address must read neither the *NCR* nor *NYT* nor *Nation* nor *Crisis* anteroom, or anything else but *Commonweal*.

This being the *female-driven* renaissance that it is, complete with wars, scientific progress, artistic bounty (e.g., cinema), and clergy scandals, Catholic humanists are faced with a challenge paralleling that facing contemporaries of More and Erasmus: the unity of the church. Unity can be maintained tenuously through misty equivocation and confusion disguised as nuance, which is, in reality, shmuance. Our unity can be

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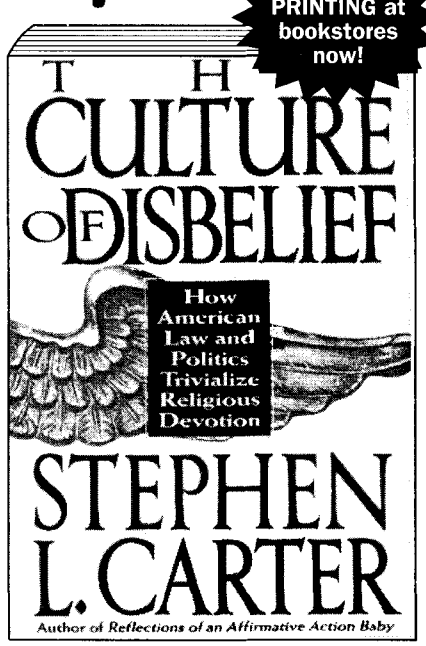
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maintained substantially by clarity and precision, by lots of good neighbors mending lots of good fences. But for the latter to work, we neighbors have to stand around the fences and chat more often—especially about Christ and what we are called to do in his name. Your recent moves have invited more back to the fences. Thank you for that. Now, please consider this further suggestion, also for clarity:

Commonweal is either Catholic, or it isn't. If your editors are laity-who-happen-to-be-Catholic-but-our-magazine-doesn't-have-to-say-so, then why proudly display your awards from the Catholic Press Association each year? The lack of an editorial banner of the magazine's association with Catholicism is a useless vanity, similar to the e.e.cummingsly (Rev.) and (Msgr.) that you continue to print in clergy signatures. Does this mean that *Commonweal* is (Catholic) too?

If so, the Catholicism of *Commonweal* stands in the most sophisticated, and silliest, tradition of disaggregated, individualist, existentialist peekaboo. Is *Commonweal*'s (Catholicism) some pragmatic holographic fig-leaf, brilliant and there when you need it and switched off when impolitic? At one time it might have been necessary, with bishops being vain and glorious and mightier, for a lay Catholic magazine to wink and nod to get along. But now, past whom do you need to wink and nod? *Commonweal* once dwelt within the Catholic ghetto, and the ghetto maintained its Catholic identity. Eating and breathing that ghetto's pervasive Catholicism, many of us deluded ourselves with existentialist anonymity. Now, with the Catholic ghetto in diaspora amidst pluralism, public professions of faith are necessary to maintain identity. *Commonweal* has reasserted its own importance for Catholicism, and is reclaiming the intellectual center it once held. But to keep this center, it must publicly and corporately commit to Catholicism in every sense of the word. Is *Commonweal* Catholic or not? The editors may individually say so, but it won't be true until *Commonweal* says so, every issue.

ALBERT SCHORSCH III

The writer is director of the Reynold Hillenbrand Institute at Niles College Seminary.

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The editors reply:

By chance, while pondering a response to (Mr.) Schorsch's letter, we ran across a passage in a John Cogley column published in the issue of December 14, 1951. Cogley was not good at schmuance, or at existentialist peekaboo; he never felt a need to give a wink or a nod to get by. Here's what he wrote:

"...To be sure, there is a sense in which *The Commonweal* can be called a Catholic magazine. Its editors and most of its contributors are Catholics. Catholic beliefs, Catholic values are the yardstick by which they measure the events of the day....

"[But] there is another sense in which *The Commonweal* cannot even be called a religious magazine. It is primarily concerned with the temporal order. It has no mandate from the church. It cannot commit the authority of the church....

"*The Commonweal* represents the efforts of a group of lay journalists to weigh and evaluate the....concerns of people everywhere and to do so within the abiding framework of the Christian tradition. This—no more and no less."

Amen.

Author's query

Spokane, Wash.

To the Editors: For a book I am writing, I would appreciate hearing from anyone who has a story to tell about a remarkable response following prayer to Saint Anthony or Saint Jude. Send your story to: Mitch Finley, P.O. Box 7128, Spokane, Wash., 99207-0128. Please include name, address, and phone number, should I need to contact you for clarification. No phone calls, please. Thank you! MITCH FINLEY

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On the Milestone Anniversary

In our recently concluded fiscal year the Commonweal Associates again bridged the gap between operating business income and our heavy publishing expenses. As *Commonweal* happily strides into its 70th year, we gratefully acknowledge the key role played year after year by the Commonweal Associates. Without their consistently loyal support *Commonweal* could never have achieved seven decades of providing Christian witness on major social, religious, and cultural issues, reading the signs of the times; without the substantial support of the Associates the magazine would have perished long since. The distinguished list below, recording gifts received from January 15, 1993, through January 13, 1994, includes an encouraging number of new Associates. So much for the successful past. For the future the Associates give us confidence in our ability to face the challenges of the 1990s. To one and all our heartfelt thanks.

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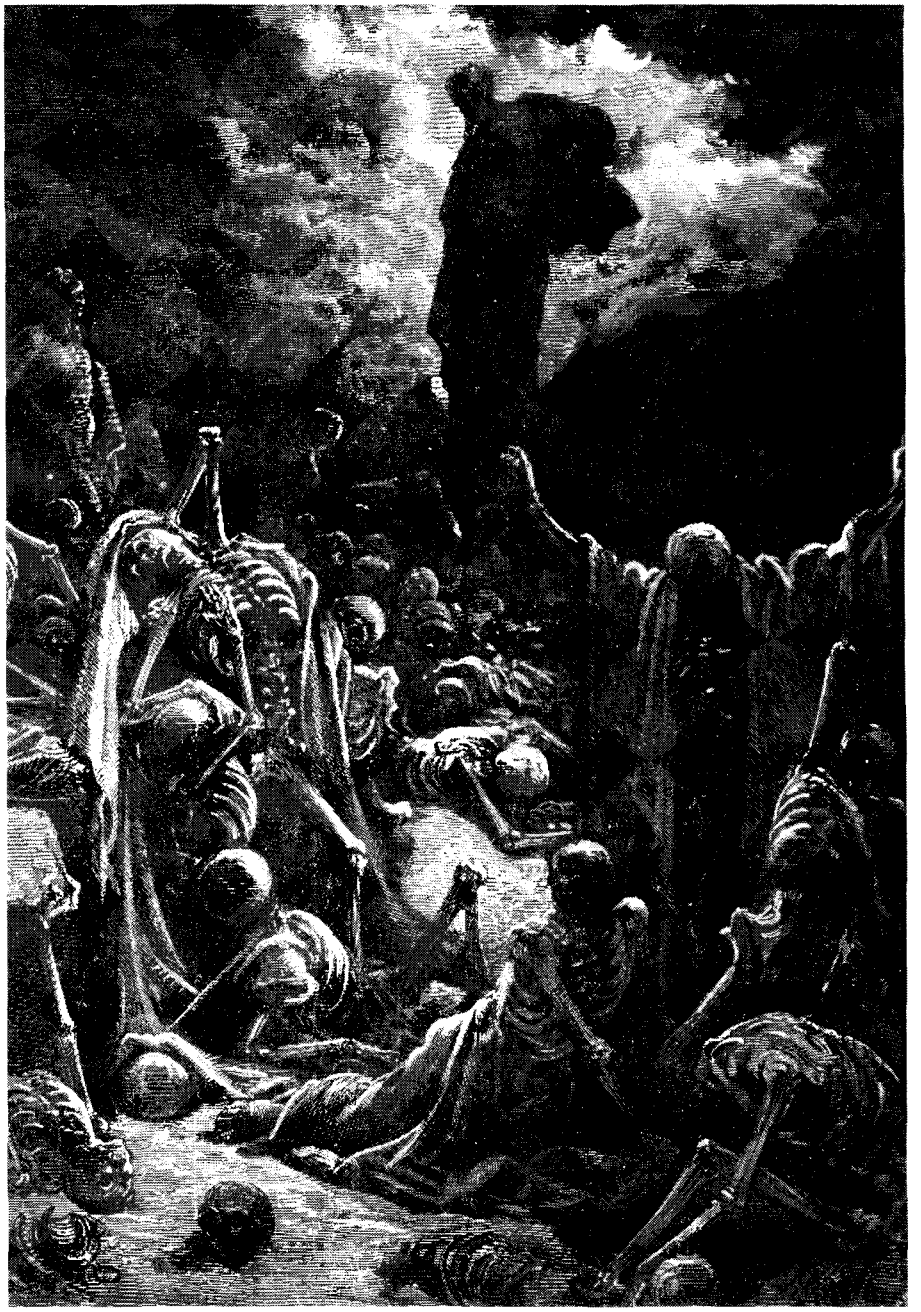

Current discussions about young Catholics suggest that Catholic leaders are less concerned with our welfare than with the well-being of the church generally. This is a natural consequence of the Second Vatican Council's revised understanding of the church, and its corresponding revision of the nature of salvation. If you see the church chiefly as the body of its people, and not chiefly as, say, a divine agency appointed by God to do his saving work on earth, your in-house evangelizing efforts will be less menacing but also somewhat less compelling.... Your sense that Catholicism isn't taking hold on the younger end leads you to think not of souls lost for eternity, but of the church losing its vigor in the here and now. Because you can't get all that worked up about young people going to hell, you mostly worry that if you fail to sponsor a Catholic identity in them, the religion you've known will go out of this corner of the world, and the kids will have missed out on something grand.

—Paul Elie,
"On Young Catholics & the Church"
Commonweal

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